AFTER THE TSUNAMI: A DOCTOR'S REPORT
SHERWIN B. NULAND

THE DEATH OF BRAND AMERICA
CLAY RISEN

WHAT SCHIAVO TAUGHT
The Editors

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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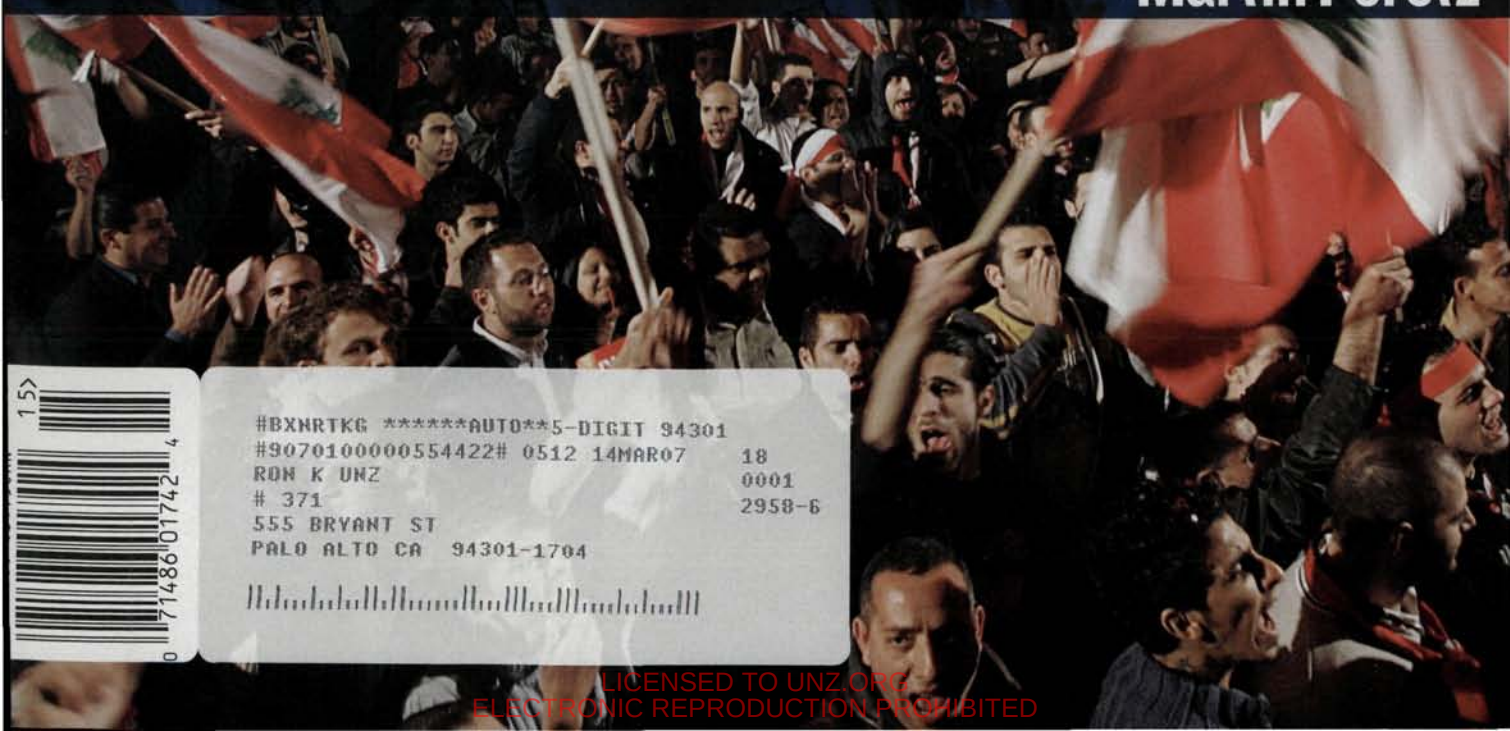
GIVING GEORGE W. BUSH HIS DUE ON MIDDLE EAST DEMOCRACY
Martin Peretz



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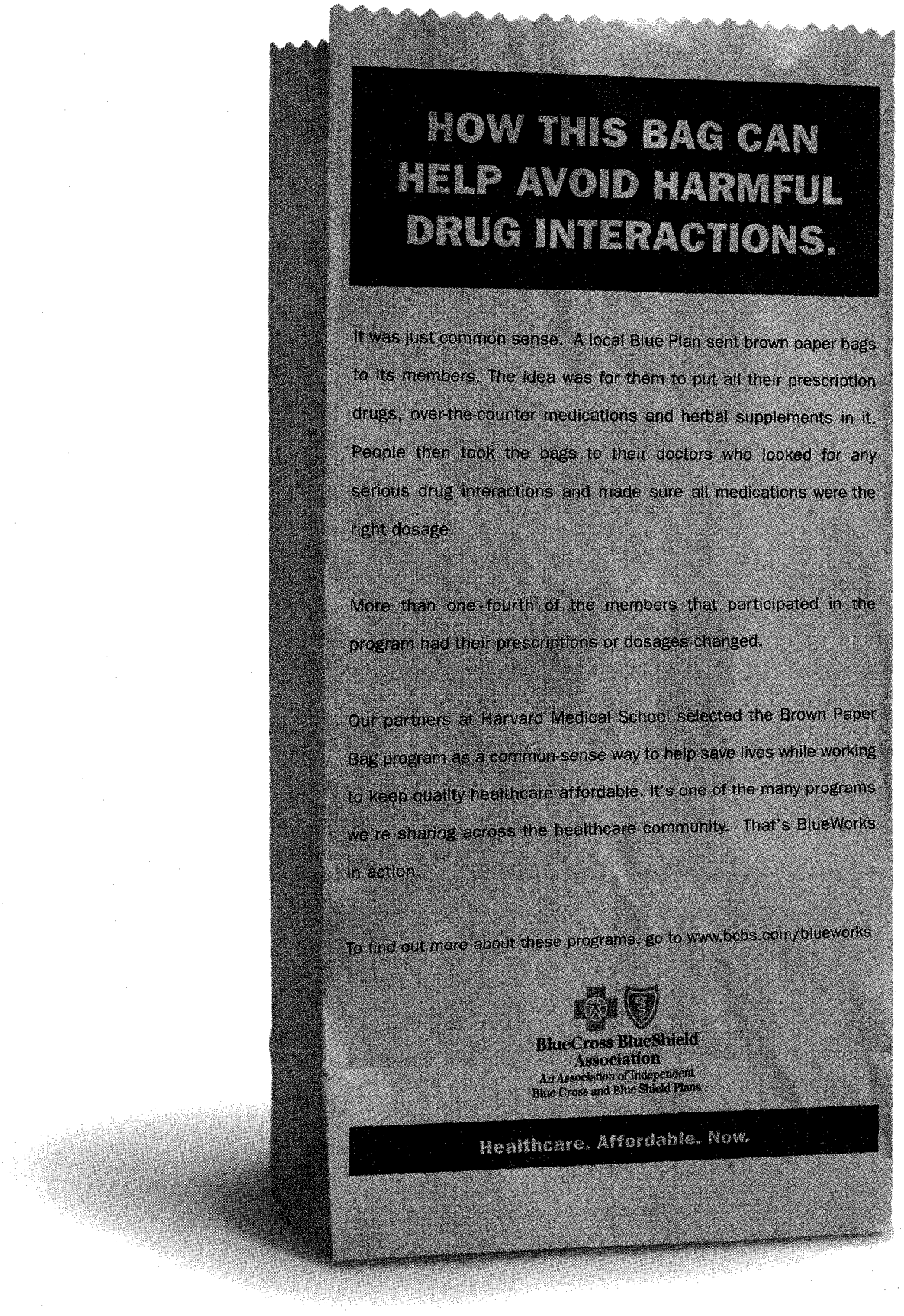
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THE NEW REPUBLIC
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THE NEW REPUBLIC
A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

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CORRESPONDENCE

SHORT CHANGED

THE EDITORS SAY THAT PRESIDENT Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief "promised billions to Africa but was soon forgotten" ("Empty Trough," February 21). This statement casually disregards unprecedented progress in the global AIDS fight. Bush, Congress, and U.S. personnel working in Africa and around the world have not forgotten this promise. They are keeping it. Your editorial does not provide any facts to support its claim, so let me offer some for your readers' consideration. Shortly before the editorial was published, the president requested $3.2 billion for the third year of the Emergency Plan, fiscal year 2006. In tight budgetary times, the administration continues to ramp up global AIDS spending and is on track to provide the $15 billion over five years that the president promised. That $3.2 billion will represent a nearly fourfold increase over U.S. spending on global HIV/AIDS in 2001.

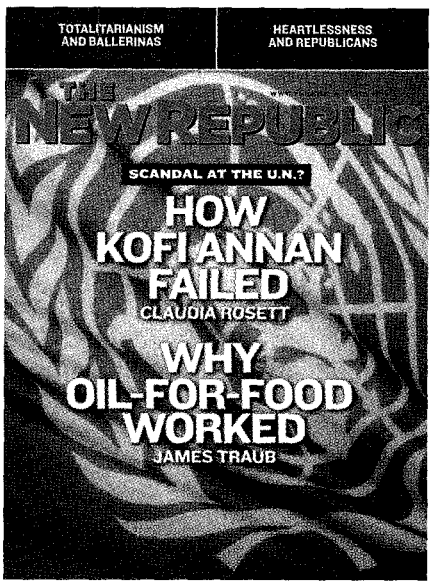
In fact, Americans are not merely providing funding, we are getting results. The United States recently announced progress in providing life-saving antiretroviral therapy in the early months of the Emergency Plan. For perspective, in December 2002, one month before Bush announced his initiative, an estimated 50,000 people were receiving therapy in all of sub-Saharan Africa. In just the first eight months of the Emergency Plan, however, the United States supported antiretroviral therapy for nearly 155,000 men, women, and children—almost all of them in sub-Saharan Africa—by working within national strategies in 15 hard-hit countries. The number of beneficiaries continues to grow rapidly—as does the number of people receiving needed HIV/AIDS prevention and care. The United States is bringing hope to people for whom it is in short supply. To dismiss this work is a disservice to the U.S. personnel and our dedicated partners on the front lines around the world. Under the most challenging circumstances, they are giving their all to win this fight. Every American can be proud of their efforts on our behalf.

AMBASSADOR RANDALL L. TOBIAS
U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator
Washington, D.C.

THE EDITORS RESPOND:
Randall L. Tobias's letter unintentionally supports our argument. He notes that, under Bush, requests for AIDS funding have increased dramatically. This we wholeheartedly endorse: What we decry is Bush's apparent willingness to see those requests slashed by Congress. In 2003, Bush promised to spend $15 billion fighting HIV/AIDS over the following five years. But, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, the next two years saw spending increase by only $2 billion. Congressional reluctance to fund Bush's AIDS initiatives seems to have had its intended effect. This year, the president's budget calls for a $3.2 billion increase—a sizable amount, to be sure, but one that leaves the president to raise $9.8 billion in the last two years before his target date. Given his record, we think it's fair to question whether he will ever meet his goal. Finally, we take umbrage at Tobias's assertion that, by questioning the president's commitment to increase AIDS funding, we are somehow doing "a disservice to the U.S. personnel and our dedicated partners on the front lines around the world." We agree completely with the ambassador when he writes that, "[u]nder the most challenging circumstances, they are giving their all to win this fight." Where we part company is in our belief that, were the president truly committed to AIDS funding, he would be doing more to mitigate those daunting circumstances.

FIELD DAY

IN HIS REVIEW OF MY BOOK *JEWS AND the American Soul*, Alan Mintz, a professor of Hebrew literature, passes judgment on a work of U.S. history, a field in which he has no professional competence ("Group Therapy," February 21).



The book takes up the history of psychology and religion in the United States since the 1880s, and Mintz is oblivious to the huge impact it has already made among scholars of U.S. history (and the history of psychology). Modern American ideas about human nature have long been viewed as simple outgrowths of the nation's Protestant culture. *Jews and the American Soul* overturns that paradigm. It shows how Jews became major voices in popular psychology and theology, transforming American conversation about the psyche into an *interchange* between Jews and Christians. Some of the figures in this story expressed attitudes that reflected their insecure social position as Jews; some asserted secular principles that echoed a religious background (e.g., Erich Fromm, an Orthodox Jew into his twenties); some spoke explicitly as religious Jews; all conveyed a Jewish moral sensibility. From Mintz's caricature, TNR readers could not possibly see why the book has caused such

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THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583). Vol. 232, Number 13, Issue 4,708, April 11, 2005. (Printed in the United States on March 31, 2005.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated March 28 & April 4, May 2 & 9, June 6 & 13, July 11 & 18, August 22 & 29, November 28 & December 5, and December 26, 2005 through January 9, 2006) at 1331 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Grant Loomis at (202) 508-4444 or our NY sales office at (212) 465-8447. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97; foreign, $113.97 (U.S. funds). Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling). © 2005 by The New Republic, LLC. *Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices.* Rights and permissions: fax (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. *Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.* Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: letters@tnr.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call (800) 827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.

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excitement among scholars and general readers alike.

ANDREW R. HEINZE
San Francisco, California

ALAN MINTZ RESPONDS:
If Andrew Heinze's book has already made the excited, enormous impact he claims it has, then I don't know why he should be concerned about the errant judgment of a mere Hebrew literature professor. Yet it does not take a specialist to notice the tendentiousness of his argument and the indiscriminant use of evidence. Heinze's letter evinces the same problem as his book. He has no trouble leaping from tidbits of information about the Jewish background of his psychologist protagonists to pronouncements about the "Jewish moral sensibility" of their psychology. He is fascinated by the former and persuaded by the latter, but, in *Jews and the American Soul*, he fails to do the hard intellectual work of forging genuine explanatory connections between the two.

FIGHT FOR LIFE

ANDREW SULLIVAN IS RIGHT THAT Senator Hillary Clinton's speech about abortion is a welcome contribution to the abortion debate ("Life Lesson," February 7). But then he uses the S word: soul. "[O]ne soul is destroyed and another wounded. ... Abortion is always wrong." That is pure, hard-core pro-life doctrine: A new soul is created almost before the father's erection has subsided, and therefore any interference with the ensouled egg is murder. If pro-choice advocates buy into those two notions, they must perforce concede the legal argument altogether. They won't. The only possible basis for common ground is that conception immediately produces *incipient* life—whether or not you agree that life then exists, life is clearly on its way. Pro-lifers can still argue that it deserves full protection, pro-choicers can still argue that incipience does not entitle the egg to outweigh the mother's right to end their relationship. But both sides can, and morally should, acknowledge that something of value is there, the loss of which should be avoided—by prevention, not inaction. From that stipulation, and not Sullivan's, flow the possibilities for the progress he describes.

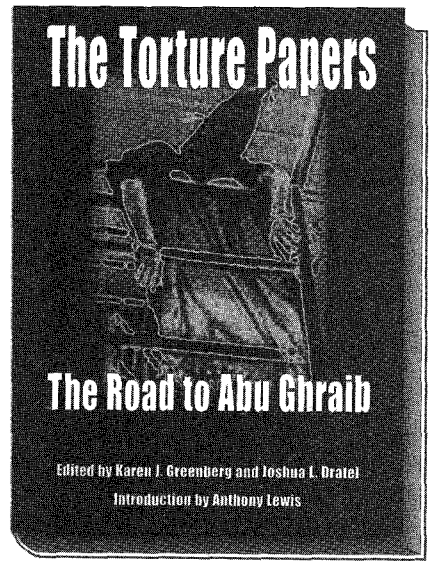
DOUGLAS L. WILSON
Naples, Florida

continued on page 37

26 inmates in American custody dead in Iraq and Afghanistan *(The New York Times 3/16/05)*

"The book is a **true public service**... [it] brings the whole twisted story into the public domain, and let us hope into every library and many personal hands."

—*Globe and Mail*



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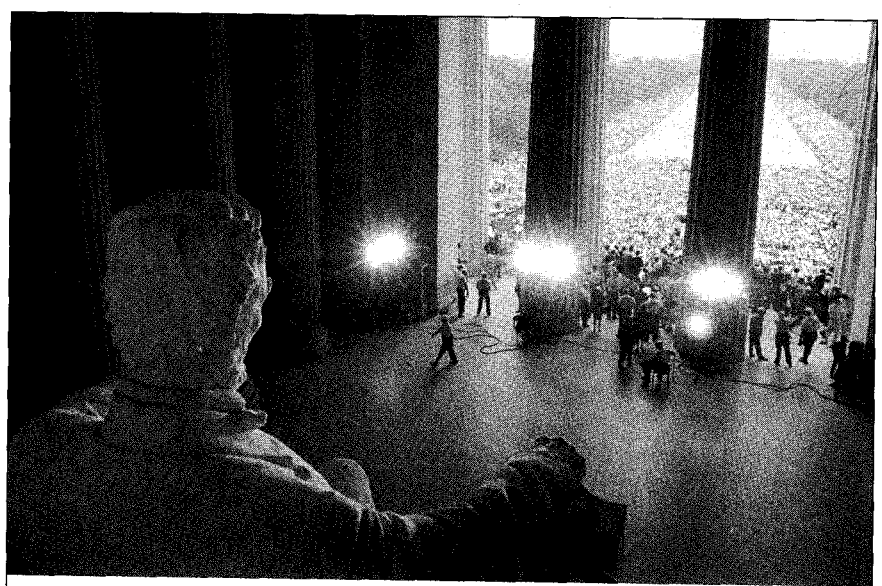

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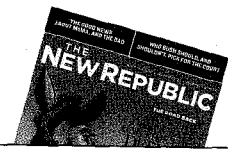

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Private Eyes

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

MUCH OF THE PRESS COVerage of the Schiavo case focused on a now-familiar split within the Republican Party between social conservatives—who insisted nothing mattered more than prolonging Terri Schiavo's life—and anti-government libertarians, who tut-tutted about the Republican leadership's encroachment on local autonomy. Some in the media, citing apocalyptic predictions from activists on both sides, went so far as to call Schiavo the beginning of a GOP schism.

In truth, the GOP has been finessing the uneasy alliance between libertarians and social conservatives for at least as long as pundits have been pointing it out. I suspect the party will pull through this time, too. Far more interesting—and politically more consequential—is an emerging Democratic split between social libertarians, who emphasize privacy, and what I'll call communitarians, for lack of a better word. Like social conservatives, the communitarians believe the government has a role to play in Schiavo-like dilemmas. If they prevail, it could help the Democratic Party reclaim its popular majority.

Today, Democrats assume their positions on social issues like abortion and the right to die have long appealed to a majority of voters. In fact, the Nixon campaign's characterization of George McGovern's platform as "acid, amnesty, abortion" was devastating to the party. It wasn't until the mid-'80s that liberals figured out how to turn their stance on social issues into a political advantage.

The impetus, as William Saletan describes in his excellent book, *Bearing Right: How Conservatives Won the Abortion War*, was a series of state-level ballot measures intended to restrict abortion rights. In 1986, a coalition of pro-choice groups hired pollster Harrison Hickman to help them craft a message capable of defeating one such campaign in Arkansas. Hickman's polls showed that, even though less than 40 percent of Arkansas voters supported an affirmative right to an abortion, 65 percent believed the decision should be left to a woman, her family, and her doctor. On Hickman's advice, the coalition of pro-choice groups framed the proposed restrictions as a blow to privacy, and the referendum failed by a narrow margin. Hickman successfully reprised the strategy in opposition to Robert Bork's 1987 Supreme Court nomination.

The problem, according to Saletan, was that this tactic only worked as long as moderates and conservatives could read their own worldviews into the notion of privacy. Conservatives, after all, didn't favor abortion. They just didn't want the federal government making the decision for them. But, once national Democrats—as opposed to more anonymous interest groups or local candidates—embraced the cause of privacy, conservatives and moderates filtered this rhetoric through their prejudices about the Democratic Party. For these voters, appeals to privacy raised all the McGovern-era suspicions of liberals as moral relativists who actually favored abortion and drugs and promiscuity.

The case in point was Michael Dukakis, whose abortion position during the 1988 campaign was heavily informed by Hickman's polling. During a debate against then–Vice President George H.W. Bush, Dukakis explained that "the question [on abortion] is, who gets to make the decision. And I think it has to be the woman in the exercise of her own conscience and religious beliefs." Exit polls showed Dukakis performing particularly badly among voters on social issues like abortion and the death penalty.

Bill Clinton's campaign in 1992 corrected many of Dukakis's missteps. Clinton viewed the abortion issue as a chance to make an affirmative statement of values—that abortion should be "safe, legal, and rare"—rather than simply a statement about what the government shouldn't do.

But, by the end of the Clinton administration, Democrats were again making the same mistakes Dukakis had. They unwittingly helped the conservatives' cause by taking seemingly popular short-term positions that nonetheless reinforced the broader perception they were morally suspect. In 1998, for example, Democrats accused the GOP of overreaching in its efforts to impeach Clinton over his affair with Monica Lewinsky. The strategy netted them gains in the House, but it raised questions in the minds of moderate voters. George W. Bush exploited these questions with his pledge to restore honor and dignity to the Oval Office in 2000 and his attacks on Al Gore's character. Gore lost voters who rated honesty and trustworthiness as the most important presidential qualities by an 80–15 margin.

When the Schiavo case began garnering national attention, Democrats' first reaction was to press their social libertarian line. "Congressional leaders have no business substituting their judgment for that of multiple state courts that have extensively considered the issues in this intensely personal family matter," House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi complained. Liberals became increasingly confident as polls showed the public overwhelmingly concerned about federal intrusion into a private family matter. Once again, Democrats risked reinforcing the perception they lacked core values.

Something interesting, however, was beginning to happen: Voices within the Democratic Party were genuinely agonizing over whether congressional intervention in the Schiavo case was truly so egregious. Almost 50 House Democrats voted in favor of the legislation authorizing the additional judicial review—many of them Southern moderates, but several of them liberal members of the Congressional Black Caucus. It was dawning on the party that there was an affirmative statement of values to be made, not simply a libertarian attack on government intervention.

The case of Terri Schiavo is incredibly complex. But the question of a government obligation to the weak, the sick, and the disabled is not—at least for Democrats. So it was reassuring to learn this week that congressional Democrats like Tom Harkin and Barney Frank are closing ranks behind legislation that would allow federal courts to review cases in which end-of-life choices are murky and the family is divided. Considered alongside Hillary Clinton's efforts to reframe the pro-choice position as a communitarian belief that every child should be born into a loving, caring family, it looks as though we're seeing the beginning of a new Democratic Party. It's a party that appeals to core values, not one that allows itself to be caricatured by their absence. Let's hope that party is here to stay.

NOAM SCHEIBE

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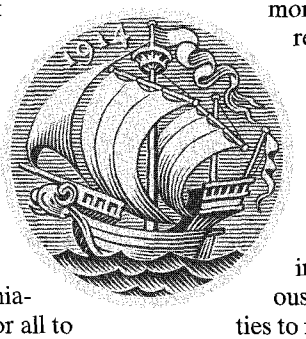
What Schiavo Taught

If Terri Schiavo will have been a martyr for any cause, it will be for the cause of moral reflection in America. This is not obvious, of course. The Schiavo "debate" has constituted one of the great degradations in modern American life. This controversy about virtue in America has been a perfect storm of American vices, as our grand national traditions of sanctimony and publicity combined to make a mockery of reasoned deliberation about difficult problems. And yet, the paradoxical effect of this rank and inescapable spectacle has been to incite an entire population to thought. Suddenly we are all speculating about the feeding tubes in our futures. Millions of Americans have been asked by these events to arrive at an understanding of how they might wish to die, which is also an understanding of how they might wish to live. We have been collectively inducted by Terri Schiavo into the harrowing intellectual circumstances of the new age of moral-medical perplexity. This is the poor woman's gift to her shallow society. We are all bioethicists now.

Historians of the American right may record that the Schiavo affair marked a momentous victory of populism over conservatism, and of religious philosophy over political philosophy. One of the most precious teachings of conservatism, after all, was to beware the tyranny of politics, to deny the sway of the public sphere over the private sphere, to restrain the state and inhibit its interference in ordinary lives. But was the personal ever more the political than outside that hospice in Florida, and in the ecclesiastical halls of Tom DeLay's and Dennis Hastert's House? All the sagacious boundaries were smashed. The machinery of government was twisted to the uses of an ideology and a family. And the president of the United States was complicit in this disfigurement. When George W. Bush made his dramatic and demagogic flight back to Washington in the middle of the night to sign that wretched bill—he must be a man of principle, he interrupted his vacation—he besmirched his oath of office, insofar as he swore to preserve and protect the Constitution, which is to say, to serve in a republic of laws. A state court in Florida had ruled against Schiavo's parents, but the president wanted its ruling abrogated. He, too, was answering to a higher authority.

Yet how did that Florida court know with confidence what Terri Schiavo's wishes were? It is a perfectly valid question. The court did have her husband's word; but it suited the Christian right to forget that the Bible defines marriage ("therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife") precisely as a usurpation of parents by spouses. More significantly, the Schiavo controversy exposed for all to see the antinomianism of the American right. It is not interested in laws, it is interested in outcomes. If the courts fail to confirm its view of what is right, then the courts must be circumvented, either by other courts or by legislatures or by executive action. The conservative press is now frothing with scorn for the judiciary. If the judiciary had ruled for "life," the conservative press would be frothing with praise.



And, alongside the antinomianism of the American right, there was the legalism of the American left, which once again repaired to judges for enlightenment about the quandaries of life. There was an awful loss of interest in compassion among those who were carrying the day, a procedural virulence. What would have been so wrong, really, if Michael Schiavo had agreed to let his wife's parents keep her alive? The liberals who were so passionate that Terri Schiavo should be allowed to die also possessed no certain knowledge of her wishes; but they carried on as if the answer to this terrible question was plain. So it is worth insisting that law is not the same as morality, even if it includes moral considerations. A judge is not a priest. A judge is not a philosopher.

Both the left's love of the courts and the right's hatred of the courts have the consequence of relieving the individual of his or her duties as a moral agent. Enough of this. There is no fleeing the fact of our moral autonomy. When liberals chose to oppose the feeding tube, they were acting as autonomous moral agents, on the basis of reasons. When conservatives chose to support the feeding tube, they were acting as autonomous moral agents, on the basis of reasons. Or so they should have been acting when they were instead waiting upon various institutions and authorities to release them from the hardship of choice and replace responsibility with obedience. The private inquiry into what is true and good is not relativism, it is the reality of ethical existence. This, too, is the legacy of Terri Schiavo: However we are guided in the justification of our beliefs, finally we have only our own consciences upon which to rely in the dark. ■

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NOTEBOOK

IDENTITY POLITICS RETURN . . . MORE ABORTIONS, OF NO CONCERN

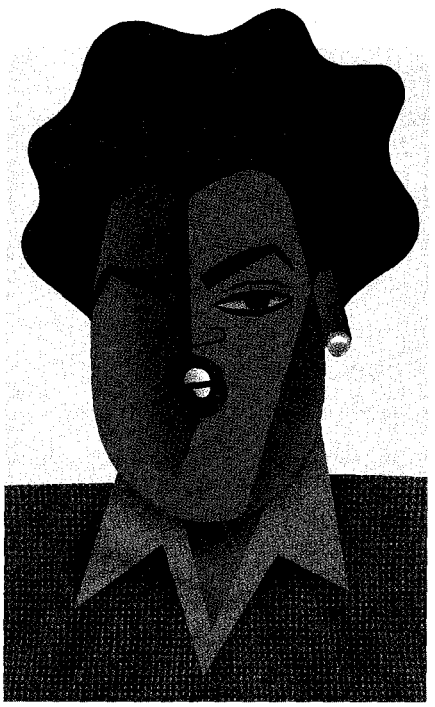
MS. BUSINESS AS USUAL

EVER SINCE SHE MANAGED AL Gore's 2000 presidential campaign, Donna Brazile has styled herself as a blunt-speaking liberal pundit who dresses down fellow Democrats with tough love and homespun wisdom. "Whoever becomes the new [Democratic] chairman cannot go back to business as usual," Brazile wrote in a typical December 2004 *New York Times* op-ed. But a column Brazile wrote for *Roll Call* this week was a classic example of just that.

Brazile's topic was the upcoming Democratic primary for the Maryland Senate seat being vacated next year by Paul Sarbanes. Several qualified Democrats—including Representatives Chris Van Hollen and Ben Cardin—have expressed interest in the seat. But Brazile is insisting that the party unite behind former NAACP President Kweisi Mfume. Why? "This is about African Americans and other loyal constituencies receiving a return on 40 years of investing our valuable political capital in the Democratic Party," Brazile proclaims, adding: "[M]any black and progressive voters intend to claim this seat for one of their own."

Evidently, Brazile's idea of rousting Democrats from their doldrums is a return to 1984 and the identity politics that sowed the party's decline. And here we thought ostensibly bare-knuckled Democrats like Brazile had resolved to play electoral politics as cannily as Republicans, lest they never recapture Congress or the White House. Yet it's apparently not enough for Brazile that Democrats nominate someone who will work to improve the lives of African Americans. That nominee must also be an African American. (Further, for some reason, he must be Mfume, even though Mfume is only one of three established African American politicians to express interest in running.)

Brazile never even bothers to address the critical question of whether Mfume



Donna Brazile

offers Democrats the best chance of retaining Sarbanes's seat, a notion doubted by some party strategists. Indeed, in the issue of *Roll Call* in which Brazile's column appears, another story cited deep skepticism about Mfume from veteran Maryland Democrats. "How on earth does a guy who has run as a Black Power candidate—what does he say to the other two-thirds of the state?" asked one. An unnamed former aide to a black representative added, "The Republicans would love to run against him in the general."

Alas, Brazile's position isn't unique. It echoes the ire of pro-choice absolutists who are protesting the party's support of pro-lifer Bob Casey Jr. as a challenger to Pennsylvania GOP Senator Rick Santorum, and who helped keep Rhode Island's Jim Langevin, another pro-lifer, from challenging incumbent GOP Senator Lincoln Chafee. Somewhere, Karl Rove is snickering.

GOP KILLS AN UNBORN BILL

AS IS EVIDENT IN THE TERRI Schiavo case, Republicans like to claim that they are the defenders of "life," particularly the lives of those who are most vulnerable, such as the severely brain-damaged and the unborn. But how, then, do you explain the embarrassing fact that, according to the Centers for Disease Control, the decline in the number of abortions under Bill Clinton has not continued since George W. Bush took office? And, more importantly, how do you explain the fact that, on March 17, Senate Republicans rejected an amendment Democrats Hillary Clinton and Harry Reid offered to the budget bill that put forward a comprehensive plan to reduce unwanted pregnancies and thereby reduce abortions?

If you take Republicans at their word—that they seek to protect the lives of fetuses—then it is inexplicable. If, on the other hand, you believe the thesis of Thomas Frank, author of *What's the Matter with Kansas?*—that Republicans cynically use moral issues like abortion to get working-class Christian voters to the polls while their real agenda is mostly about helping the wealthy—then it begins to make more sense. Why allow Democrats to reduce abortions when that might erode your ability to campaign against their supposed hostility to the lives of the unborn?

Or perhaps the Republicans' rationale is even more nefarious than electoral advantage. After all, opposing the distribution of condoms, the teaching of safer-sex methods, and the increased availability of birth control are ends unto themselves for cultural conservatives. What they really oppose is not so much the deaths of innocent fetuses but female reproductive freedom and premarital sex. And it seems they are perfectly willing to tolerate more abortions to achieve those goals.

DAVID COWLES

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SO SUE ME

WE DON'T THINK WE CAN BE SUED for saying this: About ten years ago, *The Daily Local News* of West Chester, Pennsylvania, reported that one Parkesburg Borough Council member—we'll just refer to him as "Banana" on the advice of our lawyers—called the Council president and the mayor "liars," "draft dodgers," and homosexuals with "an opportunity to have access to children."

Now, we don't stand by Banana's remarks—they seem a bit unclassy, and, since they cost him $17,500 in damages, a bit expensive. What's more, according to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, the First Amendment offers no "neutral reportage privilege," which means that reporting on what one person says about another can be grounds for a lawsuit. The Supreme Court of the United States apparently holds the same opinion: This week, it declined to review the Pennsylvania ruling. The *News* can therefore be sued for what it printed and, by extension, so might we. Hence, our clever codenames.

Despite the possibility of legal action, we're holding up all right. (Thank you in advance for the supportive cards and gift baskets.) We don't imagine the Parkesburg officials will choose to sue us. But what if we decide to report that some member of an unhinged 527 was saying that a Massachusetts senator had "lied to get his Bronze Star"? Or what if we disclosed that a loon running for reelection in Kentucky had called his opponent in the Senate race last fall "limp-wristed" and a "switch-hitter"? We might argue that such comments sully mainly their creators and that, in any case, the public has an interest in being informed about them. But it wouldn't protect us. In fact, come to think of it, this paragraph alone might just have brought on two more lawsuits. Well, that's one way to end negative campaigning. ■

TNR.commentary

&c.

NOAM SCHEIBER

NO NEED FOR PARTY PLANNERS: Here are excerpts from a memo written by Democratic pollsters Geoffrey Garin and Guy Molyneux and first cited by *The Hotline* on March 29:

> We conducted three focus groups on the issue of Social Security on March 23 with swing voters in Exton, Pennsylvania. Consistent with all national polls, we found little enthusiasm for—and a great deal of concern over—President Bush's Social Security privatization proposal. . . .
>
> In these sessions we showed the 30 swing voters the new ad by Progress for America ("Tick Tock") that attacks Democrats in Congress for failing to put forward a Social Security plan. The response was strong and nearly unanimous: voters hate this ad and find it completely unpersuasive. . . . People are not convinced that Democrats do not have ideas for strengthening Social Security, but also say that even if that were true it is not a good reason to adopt a bad plan (which they feel Bush's is).
>
> While many voters agree that Social Security faces long-term funding problems that need to be addressed, they also feel that "we have the time to do it right." They don't like what they have heard about privatization, and eventually want to hear other ideas. But they reject the premise that this is an urgent problem, and so are not in any particular hurry to hear a Democratic plan at this time.

I couldn't agree more. If Democrats put forth a plan of their own, which would invariably call for some pain (i.e., higher taxes or reduction of benefits), it would only throw the White House a lifeline at a time when all the polls show it's drowning on Social Security. One can imagine Bush using a Democratic plan to argue that private accounts are far more desirable, since they promise goodies (private accounts) in addition to pain (tax increases or benefit cuts). Worse, it's going to be pretty hard to attack Republicans for cutting benefits when you're proposing the same thing. (Obviously Democrats' proposed cuts would be much smaller, but that might not matter.) Finally, as my colleague Jonathan Chait has repeatedly pointed out, the existence of a White House plan would seem to be a prerequisite for arguing that Democrats have nothing to offer. So far none has been forthcoming, which may be one reason the Garin-Molyneux focus groups suggest this argument has fallen flat.

IRAQ'D

SPENCER ACKERMAN

LONG DIVISION: Both the *Los Angeles Times* and Knight Ridder mine the recent Sunni conference on participation in the political process for clues to the future of Sunni politics. They come to opposite conclusions: The *Times* finds the conference auspicious ("encouraging news for the U.S. effort to spread democracy in the Middle East") while KR finds some causes for alarm ("there are signs that some Sunni groups may be digging in their heels").

The really interesting conclusions to be drawn from the conference, though, belong to the Sunnis' political rivals. The *Times* quotes Ibrahim Jaafari, who laments the difficulty of finding a Sunni negotiating partner. Well, sort of:

> We will try to bridge the gap, but they will have to accept whatever we can do.

Think so? This is basically the gamble made about Sunni inclusion by the Coalition Provisional Authority and Iyad Allawi's government: The Sunnis will accept de-Baathification because they have no choice. The Sunnis will accept the interim government because President Ghazi Al Yawar *is* the Sunnis. The Sunnis will accept the interim government once "re-Baathification" is shown to be in their interests. The Sunnis will accept the political process because . . . well, because they have no choice. It hasn't worked so far, and the reason why is fairly clear: There haven't been many attempts to distinguish between illegitimate and legitimate Sunni political grievances and ambitions and to negotiate with Sunni politicians accordingly.

It's well and good—and true—to say that there isn't one single Sunni political figure to deal with. But there are centers of Sunni influence, and they don't need to show up at the Babylon Hotel to be found. Jaafari can try the Association of Muslim Scholars. The Association is a vocal advocate of the anti-occupation insurgency—a position that, while repellent, puts it in line with a majority of Sunnis—and, more importantly, a vocal opponent of insurgent attacks on Shia, civilians in general, and Iraqi security forces. Its thousands of mosques give it significant influence over the Sunni community. If Jaafari is looking for a Sunni interlocutor, he doesn't need to look much further.

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White House Watch

Face Plant

BY RYAN LIZZA

THE WHITE HOUSE has a new favorite Democrat. President Bush and his aides can't stop talking about a guy named Robert Pozen. The investment executive from Boston has been making the rounds at Washington editorial boards and think-tank forums flacking—what else?—a Social Security plan. Bush launched Pozen into the headlines at his March 16 news conference when, apropos of nothing, he noted that "one of the interesting ideas [on Social Security] was by this fellow—by a Democrat economist, name of Pozen. He came to visit the White House." Two days later, the administration rose in a chorus echoing Pozen's name. Spokesman Scott McClellan reminded the press aboard Air Force One of the man's "useful and constructive" ideas. At two Florida events, Bush brought up the name of the obscure lawyer (not economist) whose ideas he finds "interesting." And, that night, in an interview on CNBC, Dick Cheney made the by-now-obligatory mention of Pozen. A few days later, Alan B. Hubbard, chairman of the White House's National Economic Council, upgraded Bush's view of the Pozen plan from "interesting" to "very attractive."

Pozen has arrived at a critical time for Bush. One of the Social Security debate's side dramas has been the increasingly desperate effort by the White House to find a Democrat to give Bush's privatization plan a patina of bipartisanship. On education reform, Bush had Ted Kennedy. On tax cuts, he had Zell Miller. On the war in Iraq, he had Joe Lieberman. Each one was elevated to rock star status to help Bush pass his agenda. But, on Social Security, all of Bush's high-profile Democratic allies are either retired (John Breaux), defeated (Charlie Stenholm), or dead (Pat Moynihan). After a thorough search, the poor White House has had to resort to Pozen, the "Democrat economist."

Even worse, Pozen's supposed Democratic bona fides cause Washington Dems to chortle. Pozen has spent most of his career bouncing between Wall Street (Fidelity, MFS Investment Management) and academia (NYU, Harvard). He backed John Kerry in 2004 and has donated money to several Democratic campaigns, but he has also given $1,000 to Rob Portman, a conservative Republican and member of the House leadership. Meanwhile, his last two stints in politics were as a member of Bush's Social Security Commission and as an economic adviser to Mitt Romney, the Republican governor of Massachusetts.

Partisan credentials aside, the White House has still achieved one intended effect of embracing Pozen, which is to create an aura of bipartisanship around Bush's proposal. In Washington, the press loves nothing more than a compromise plan, especially on an issue as seemingly intractable as Social Security. In recent coverage of the issue, the notion that Pozen's plan could be the basis for a deal that will rescue Bush has become conventional wisdom. In a valentine to Pozen, *The Washington Post*'s Ruth Marcus dubbed the plan "Bush Smart" and described it as "less radical and more compassionate than the president's." *U.S. News & World Report* recently declared that the Pozen plan "could become the framework for a final compromise."

But the opposite is true. Rather than a middle-ground alternative that points the way toward a grand bargain, Pozen's well-intentioned ideas actually reveal why there is probably no room for one.

TO UNDERSTAND WHAT Pozen is proposing, you have to take a step back and understand the parameters within which he is operating. Any policy wonk offering his services in the current Social Security debate has to address two overriding issues: First, will your plan have private accounts? Second, how much are you willing to fiddle with taxes and how much with benefits? Bush has answered these questions clearly and repeatedly. The plan he signs into law must have private accounts (carved out of Social Security), and there can be no tax increases, only benefit cuts. From Bush's perspective, the only discussion left to have is about the details—the size of the accounts, the rules that will govern them, and the nature and distribution of the benefit cuts. (Bush has hinted he might be willing to increase the cap on income subject to the Social Security payroll tax.) Meanwhile, the Democrats have answered the first question by unequivocally ruling out private accounts. They have hedged on the second question, but the party's policy elite insists on a balanced mixture of both benefit cuts *and* tax increases.

In designing his "compromise" plan, Pozen decided to abide by Bush's parameters: private accounts, benefit cuts, and no tax increases. Before Pozen came along, there was a name for this proposal. It was called "the Bush plan," and it was failing spectacularly. The singular innovation of Pozen's much-hyped proposal is that his benefit cuts would be less draconian for low-income Americans than Bush's would be. Whereas the White House originally wanted to move from full wage indexing to full price indexing—that is, from a formula that uses the increase in wages to determine benefits to one that uses the much slower increase in prices—Pozen would simply blend the two systems. The benefits for low earners would stay pegged to wages, while benefits for high earners would be pegged to prices. Benefits for earners in the middle would be determined by a formula that combines both wage and price indexing. It's called progressive indexing, and, in a nutshell, that is what Pozen, the White House, and some in the press believe will break the Social Security logjam.

But this is a comically ill-informed reading of the political situation. Democrats believe that private accounts are the

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thin end of a wedge to destroy Social Security. Asking them to support private accounts in exchange for adding a little progressivity to the Social Security benefits formula is the equivalent of Democrats in 1993 asking the GOP to support Hillarycare in exchange for, say, a small capital gains tax cut.

And, even if Pozen's indexing plan weren't coupled to private accounts, it would be anathema to liberals. As Jason Furman of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities explained in a recent analysis, the long-term effect of progressive indexing would be to turn Social Security into a welfare system and erode support for it. While there is now some wealth redistribution inherent in Social Security, there is also a relationship between how much one contributes to Social Security and the benefits one receives upon retirement, a linkage that is the linchpin of the system's near-universal support. Under the Pozen plan, benefits for high and middle earners would, over time, be drastically reduced, while benefits for low earners would hold steady. The entire benefit structure would be flattened, turning it into a wealth-transfer system from rich to poor and shattering the system's political popularity.

These problems flow from the fact that Pozen (and Bush) refuse to seriously consider the possibility of tax changes. They have concentrated all their policy ingenuity on slightly more equitable ways to cut benefits, but they simply ignore how this money is being collected in the first place. If the White House really cared about making Social Security a more progressive system, the easiest way to accomplish that would be to fiddle with taxes rather than benefits.

As for conservatives, the Pozen plan must be particularly maddening. They don't believe that Bush should even be talking about specific benefit cuts. Karl Rove, according to *The New York Times*, recently pulled Jack Kemp aside at an event and scolded him for organizing a crusade against Bush's price-indexing plan. The ideal plan for conservatives like Kemp would have large private accounts and no meddling with either benefits or taxes—the so-called "free lunch" option. Conservatives are tearing their hair out as they watch Bush negotiate with himself in public, moving from full price indexing (drastic benefit cuts) to progressive price indexing (less drastic benefit cuts) in a few months with no response from Democrats. Even worse, the private accounts in the Pozen plan are half the size of Bush's original plan, so Bush is likely to lose conservative supporters, especially in the House, by embracing Pozen. "Pozen's plan is further to the left than we need to move," says conservative activist Grover Norquist. "Plus, the other challenge is that any benefit cuts are problematic because Bush campaigned in 2000 and 2004 saying he didn't want any benefit cuts."

So why is Pozen the White House's new best friend? Because Bush is desperate. He is boxed in by his decision to make the inclusion of private accounts and the exclusion of tax increases his two nonnegotiable demands. The only real policy olive branch he can offer Democrats is on the restructuring of benefits, and it's not enough. "This is not anything that's going to be greeted with open arms in the Democratic caucus," says Harry Reid's spokesman, Jim Manley. By embracing Pozen, the White House has essentially rebranded its proposal in a way that alienates both sides: "The new Bush plan—smaller private accounts, less drastic benefit cuts." Not exactly a winning slogan. ■

Salvador in Iraq.
Flash Back

BY JONATHAN D. TEPPERMAN

In April, when the Senate begins considering John D. Negroponte's nomination as the nation's first intelligence czar, much of the hearings are likely to focus on his role in Central America's "dirty wars" of the 1980s. Questions abound over just how much Negroponte, who was ambassador to Honduras from 1981 to 1985, knew at the time about death squads and other abuses in the region, and Democratic Senate staffers have promised to grill Negroponte about this history.

The answers they uncover promise to have more than historical relevance. For, in recent months, references to Central America in the '80s have started to pop up in the most unlikely of places: Iraq. As the insurgency there has ground on, and Washington has scrambled to find new tactics to combat it, the Bush administration has shown signs it is borrowing from the cold war Central America playbook. This pairing of Mesoamerica and Mesopotamia first came to light in mid-January, when *Newsweek* and *The New Yorker* reported that the Pentagon was considering pursuing something called the "Salvador option" in Iraq. During El Salvador's bloody twelve-year civil war, which ended in 1992, the United States had used American trainers and vast amounts of cash to strengthen the Salvadoran military in its battle against leftist guerrillas. It had also allegedly supported the use of right-wing paramilitaries and death squads to liquidate the leaders of the rebellion. And it was this latter policy, the articles claimed, that was now being contemplated for Iraq: the creation of elite commando units, trained by American Special Operations Forces, and made up of Shia militiamen and Kurdish *peshmerga*, to hunt down leaders of the Sunni insurgency. When asked, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stopped short of categorically denying the Salvador option, but refused to comment further.

Although Rumsfeld isn't talking, others close to him have, and their comments suggest that the Salvador option may be on the table—an ominous sign for Iraq. In resur-

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recting El Salvador—one of the darkest episodes in recent U.S. history—as a model of a successful counterinsurgency, the Pentagon and hawks close to the administration have relied on faulty history and wishful thinking. Contrary to conventional wisdom, U.S. policy in Central America during the '80s was seriously misguided, and—other than contributing to the death of tens of thousands of civilians—ultimately ineffectual. If applied in Iraq today, the results could be even worse.

DESPITE RUMSFELD'S TEPID denials, enthusiasm for using El Salvador as a precedent for Iraq runs deep in Republican foreign policy circles. Prominent hawks close to the administration have publicly touted the benefits of this approach. Max Boot, of the Council on Foreign Relations, argues that U.S. policy in Central America was "tremendously successful" at putting down local insurgencies and that "everyone agrees" it is the model to follow. And Eliot Cohen, director of the Strategic Studies Program at Johns Hopkins—and whose last book was reported to be bedtime reading for President Bush—has said, "We did counterinsurgency very well in Salvador."

Apparently the White House agrees. Despite the fact that El Salvador's civil war killed 70,000 people on both sides and featured widespread torture and the deliberate targeting of civilians, Vice President Dick Cheney has recommended applying this type of strategy in Iraq. Large parts of the uniformed brass seem to feel the same way, according to numerous senior military officers I spoke with. Explains Andrew Bacevich, a former Army colonel and now a professor at Boston University, "In the institutional memory of the military, it [El Salvador] is viewed as a success. That's the place we got counterinsurgency right."

To be fair, there is some ambiguity over exactly what is meant by the Salvador option today. Boot, for one, argues that it has nothing to do with paramilitaries. "I can tell you what is *not* meant by the El Salvador option," he tells me: "death squads." Instead, he argues, El Salvador is simply an example of a war in which Washington deployed a small number of American troops to train a large, effective local counterinsurgency. According to this interpretation, the Salvador option is relatively uncontroversial, calling for nothing more sinister than Iraqification of the effort—accelerating the training of the Iraqi army so it can take over the job of fighting the insurgency. This goal is already stated American policy.

The problem with this innocuous take, however, is that many historians and policy veterans think it seriously mischaracterizes what actually occurred in El Salvador during its civil war. Experts agree that Boot is technically correct—the United States did not directly back death squads—but they insist that one cannot ignore the large role the paramilitaries nonetheless played. Thomas Pickering, who was ambassador to El Salvador from 1983 to 1985, says that, while it was U.S. policy to publicly denounce the death squads, their "kind of tactics [were] tacitly supported by the U.S. government, even though [they] were freelance." Other analysts are more blunt. "We did back the guys who went after the bad guys," says Lawrence Korb, assistant secretary of defense from 1981 to 1985. "And [we] defined 'bad guys' pretty broadly." According to William LeoGrande, a professor at American University and the author of a major study of the conflict, Washington knew that the intelligence it passed to the Salvadoran government eventually made its way to the paramilitaries. "We did support the guys who organized them," he says, "so it's a little precious to deny that we supported the death squads themselves."

As this suggests, the controversy over what really occurred in Central America is a live one, and, if Washington is now contemplating a Salvador option for Iraq, figuring out what actually went on there 20 years ago is of more than academic interest. While historians may debate the answer, moreover, many in the White House know the actual details, since several of the leading figures in Iraq policy today also played key roles in the earlier conflict. In addition to Negroponte, Elliot Abrams, now deputy national security adviser, was Ronald Reagan's assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs.

And the signs from Iraq suggest that, whatever these officials mean by the Salvador model today, it involves far more than just training a new regular Iraqi army. Reuel Marc Gerecht, an ex-CIA analyst now at the American Enterprise Institute, confirms that a version of assassination squads, Kurdish and Shia commando teams, have indeed been assembled to go after Sunni insurgent leaders. "[The Pentagon] is trying to expand these units and deploy them more aggressively," Gerecht says. And Stuart Herrington—a former Army intelligence officer who, during the Vietnam war, helped lead the Phoenix Program, an assassination campaign against Viet Cong cadres, recently visited Iraq as a counterinsurgency consultant to the Pentagon. The exact nature of Herrington's work in Iraq remains classified, but, he tells me, "When I was [in Iraq], I favored using Shiites and Kurds to go after the Sunnis."

ALL THIS RAISES two critical questions. Putting aside any moral qualms one may have about paramilitaries or death squads, did they actually work in El Salvador, and could they work in Iraq today? The answers, unfortunately, are no and no. Cheney and other champions of the Salvador option have their history wrong. Although El Salvador's paramilitaries and the U.S.-trained regular army proved very good at killing civilians during the '80s, they were much less effective at killing real insurgents. According to Mark Danner, author of a prominent book about the conflict, "The Salvador [military] killed the people who were easy to kill"—i.e., civilians. American military officers routinely derided their Salvadoran peers at the time for avoiding actual engagements with guerrillas. Larry C. Johnson, a former CIA operative, says the counterinsurgency in El Salvador "utterly failed."

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It's Time to Act on High School Reform

KURT M. LANDGRAF,
PRESIDENT & CEO, ETS

"The imperative for action is urgent."

The quote comes from Achieve, a bipartisan group created by governors and business leaders to support reform of America's public high schools. The insight couldn't be more timely, or more worth heeding.

By now, it's widely recognized that our high schools are, as Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates says, "obsolete." In recent weeks, a consensus has also emerged that now is the time to act. Those of us who are passionate about education reform have begun to do just that.

The National Governors Association's recent education summit, for instance, saw a number of excellent reform proposals, including Gates' call for an emphasis on "the 3 R's": *rigorous* curriculum, made *relevant* by excellent teachers, in a setting in which personal *relationships* create a welcoming learning environment.

The governors' summit also produced a five-point "Action Agenda" that can serve as a model for school systems throughout the country:

1. **Restore value to the high school diploma** by raising standards for *all* students, and tying graduation tests and requirements to the expectations of colleges and employers

2. **Redesign high schools** to provide students with the high-level knowledge and skills they need and the educational options and support that are crucial to academic success

3. **Give students the excellent teachers and principals they need** by improving teachers' and principals' knowledge and skills, and providing incentives for teachers to go — and stay — where they're needed most

4. **Set goals, measure progress, and hold high schools and colleges accountable** to benchmarks, and provide timely, effective intervention in low-performing schools

5. **Streamline and improve education governance** so that elementary, secondary and postsecondary schools work more collaboratively

Collaboration between secondary and postsecondary schools is key. It will be the theme of ETS's own "College Readiness/College Success Summit" next month, which will bring together some of the leading groups involved in helping to ensure high school students are prepared for postsecondary success.

Now that high school reform is on the public policy agenda, we have an opportunity to make improvements that will last for generations — if we seize the moment.

At ETS, we're doing our part. We're listening to educators, parents and policymakers. We're learning from sound research. And we're leading the effort to achieve both informed public policy and informed educational practice.

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"What ended the war," he adds, "was the end of the Soviet Union, the drying up of support from Fidel Castro, and the fact that the Sandinistas in Nicaragua were no longer in a position to support the [insurgency]." LeoGrande agrees: "Precisely because the military failed to defeat the guerrillas, they had to go for a political settlement. This was not an army that won." Rather, the conflict stopped when the U.S. Congress "cut aid to the government [of El Salvador] by 50 percent" and "the U.S. pipeline came to an end."

The real history of El Salvador, meanwhile, bodes ill for the Pentagon's plan to replay its Salvador strategy in Iraq. Given the desire of both Washington and Baghdad for a lower U.S. profile, it is probably necessary to hand over more control of the counterinsurgency to Iraqis. And, as Richard Haass, director of the State Department's policy planning staff during Bush's first term, warns, "There are clear pros and cons whenever you give up control to local forces. Things will be done that will connect the United States with activities that will be hard for us to defend." Part of the problem is that the commandos may not be vetted carefully. As Haass warns, "We will lose control over methods." This means an increased probability of human rights abuses and wrongful killings. Factor in the difficulty of identifying just who the leaders of the Sunni insurgency are, and the danger of serious unintended consequences becomes very real. Factional militias may start pursuing their own agendas and liquidating their enemies.

These risks will be magnified, moreover, if the Pentagon sets up Shia and Kurdish hit squads to do the dirty work. Merely creating such teams would likely increase communal tensions, especially if coupled with the formation of a new government that largely excludes Iraq's Sunni minority, many of which boycotted the recent elections. As Larry Diamond, a former adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, explains, "The Sunnis already feel they got screwed politically." If militias "start picking off prominent but radical Sunni leaders," he says, "then one of the possible ultimate nightmares—ethnic civil war—becomes much more plausible." If you start killing people "who weren't really major players in the insurgency, then you'll have a geometric spiraling of violence," Diamond warns.

GIVEN THESE DANGERS, the fact that the Pentagon is even contemplating the Salvador model is highly alarming. In fact, says Johnson, it's a sign "of sheer desperation on the part of the United States." There is, however, a glimmer of hope amid the growing storm clouds. Johnson, Diamond, LeoGrande, and other experts agree that the real lesson of El Salvador is that insurgencies are defeated through political means, not simply military ones. In this sense, the recent Iraqi election is a huge step forward, and, if the Bush administration avoids using factional forces to ramp up the counterinsurgency, there's still a chance it could get this lesson right. But, as the bloodshed continues, poor choices based on bad history could make the future even worse. ■

Kosovo Dispatch

Paradigm Slip

BY ALKMAN GRANITSAS

THE FIRST SIGN of ethnic tension confronts me just a few miles from the border as I drive north into Kosovo. In the town of Kačanik, I pass an old Serbian Orthodox chapel. It is surrounded by a high fence and barbed wire. There are three sandbag bunkers around the chapel, a double row of cement and steel tank traps at the entrance, and a guard post inside the fence. The grounds look more like an armed camp than a place of worship. Later, I learn the church has been all but abandoned. Once, there was a small community of Orthodox Serbs living in Kačanik, but they have either fled or been killed by Albanians. So the chapel sits empty. And yet, it remains guarded night and day by international peacekeepers, to protect it from mobs of Muslim Albanians.

Almost six years ago, the international community—the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and an alphabet soup of NGOs—descended upon Kosovo to protect Albanians from the rampaging Serb-dominated Yugoslav army. Since then, the army has been driven out, and almost all of the 800,000 Albanian refugees have returned; Kosovo has been touted as a success story and a model for other peacekeeping operations.

But the abandoned chapel in Kačanik—and dozens of others like it—suggests that Kosovo is far from a success. The tolerant and multiethnic society the peacekeepers came here to nurture and protect is a fiction. Today, their mission is failing: Since the United Nations and the 17,000 foreign troops in the Kosovo peacekeeping mission (KFOR) came to town, a reverse ethnic cleansing has taken place. Tens of thousands of Serbs have left the province after harassment and violence at the hands of Albanians. Worse, the majority Albanian community now practices the same kind of brutal discrimination against Serbs that the Albanians suffered for so many years.

ETHNIC TENSIONS IN Kosovo are nothing new. In the former Yugoslavia, Belgrade alternately tried conciliation or repression to curb the rising discontent of the Albanian community, which constitutes a majority in the province. In 1974, Kosovo was granted considerable autonomy; in 1981, after riots led by Kosovar Albanians demanding full republic status for the province, between 500 and 1,000 Albanians were killed in a brutal crackdown. "Kosovo is the most difficult prob-

Alkman Granitsas is a journalist based in Athens.

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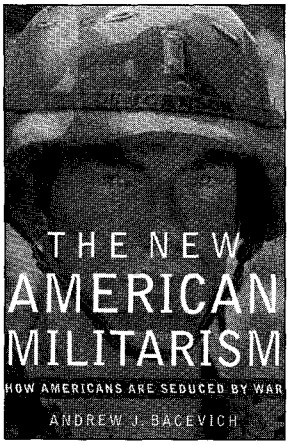

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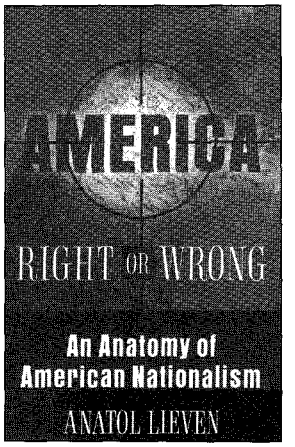

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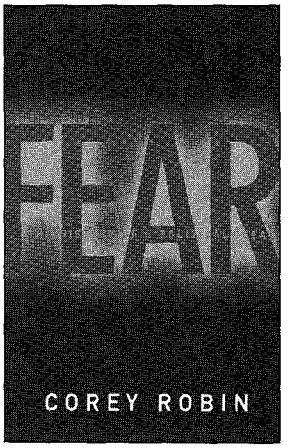

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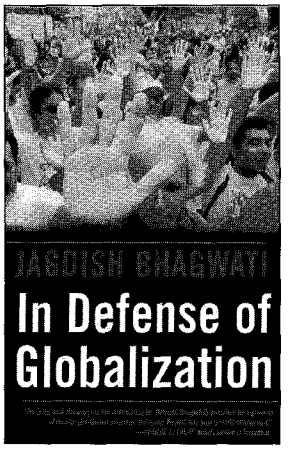

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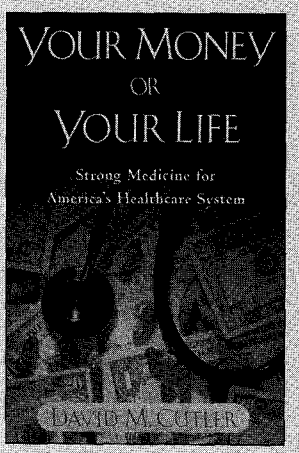

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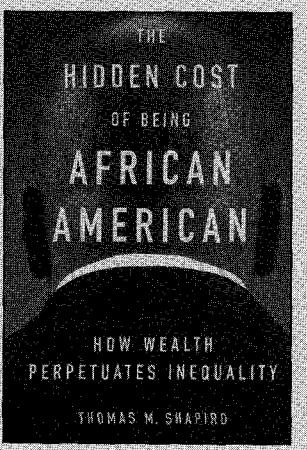

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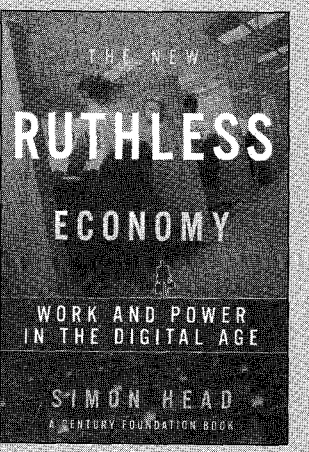

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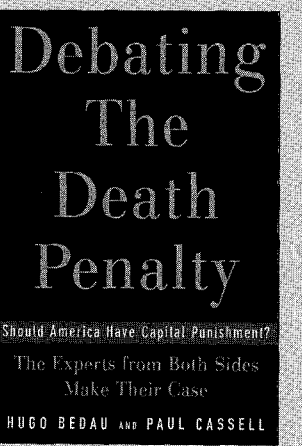

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lem in the Balkans," says Dušan Bataković, a Serbian diplomat and expert on Kosovo. "In Bosnia, you were dealing with people who spoke the same language and shared the same ethnic identity. In Kosovo, you have an enormous ethnic distance."

By the late '80s, nationalism was growing in Kosovo. After Slobodan Milosevic's rise to power, he stripped Kosovo of its autonomous status and dissolved the provincial parliament. In reaction, Kosovar Albanians declared themselves independent.

Unfortunately, the international community then missed the first of several opportunities to prevent bloodshed. In 1991, Kosovar Albanians petitioned the European Union to recognize their independence. It did not. A year later, Bosnia declared its independence, touching off a brutal interethnic war. Everyone knew Kosovo would be next, and, as the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords were being hammered out, the Kosovar Albanian leader, Ibrahim Rugova, begged members of the international community to include Kosovo in the discussions. They did not.

Within months, a guerrilla war in Kosovo would begin between Serbs and Albanians. When neighboring Albania collapsed, offering Albanian Kosovar guerrillas access to heavy arms, the Kosovar Albanians stepped up their attacks, and, in 1998 and 1999, the Serb forces responded in kind with increasing violence. This violence often targeted civilians, as the Serbs emptied and destroyed whole Albanian villages in a misguided attempt to isolate the guerrillas from their sympathizers. The international community was finally stirred to action, with the United Nations passing resolutions calling for a cease-fire in Kosovo and the Clinton administration, along with NATO, bombing Serb military forces. In response, the Serbs initially increased the pace of their ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, driving 800,000 ethnic Albanians from their homes, but the air war ultimately forced Serbia to relent and to pull its troops out. In 1999, KFOR was created.

But, by then, the foundation for today's problems in Kosovo had been laid. By not intervening until so much blood had already been shed, rather than trying to settle the Kosovo dispute earlier, the international community had allowed tension in the province to rise so high that it could never be stuffed back in the bottle. Had the international community better handled the dissolution from the start, "tens of thousands of lives [would] have been saved," Nenad Sebek, executive director of the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, said in a speech last June. More specifically, the NATO bombing campaign set a dangerous precedent—that the international community would intervene on the side of guerrillas against a sovereign government. And today, both Serbs and Albanians in the province believe that, because of this history, the world will soon allow Kosovo to become independent. Kosovar Albanians believe time is on their side, and no amount of U.N. confidence-building programs bringing together Serbs and Albanians will change that mentality.

CONVINCED THEY CAN act with impunity and tired of waiting for independence, Albanians in the province are growing restless. Last year, violent race riots erupted in Kosovo, revealing the ethnic tensions that lie just below the surface in Kosovo. For three days, a pogrom against the Serb minority raged out of control while many of the KFOR troops stayed in their camps, doing nothing to intervene. By the time it was over, 19 people were dead, thousands were injured, and almost 600 buildings had been destroyed.

The riots were the inevitable outcome of an escalating anti-Serb campaign. Long before, Serbs warned of discrimination and violence. Serbs frequently have complained of threats against them by Albanian goons and attacks on their homes by Albanian thugs, who force the Serbs out and resettle Albanians in their place. Late last year, in fact, the United Nations reported several cases in the town of Obilić where Albanian families reoccupied former Serb homes, even after those homes had been restored for the Serbs by the United Nations. Meanwhile, Serb children and municipal workers have often had to be escorted to school and to work by armed guards, for fear of attacks; the website of the Serb Orthodox church in Kosovo displays photos of a Serb teenager bludgeoned to death, with blood oozing from his scalp. It's not surprising, then, that many Serbs are fleeing Kosovo. Estimates of the number of Serbs that have left the province in the last six years range from 65,000 to 345,000. In the Kosovar capital of Priština alone, there were some 40,000 Serbs before 1999. Today, there are fewer than 100.

The town of Mitrovica has been one of the flashpoints. The town is divided by the shallow Ibar River. From this point south, the province is predominantly Albanian, to the north it is predominantly Serb. Indeed, the northern part of Mitrovica remains very much a part of Serbia. On the streets, Serbian is the lingua franca, the Serbian dinar is legal currency, and all the public institutions are still funded by Belgrade.

It was near Mitrovica that three Albanian children—who the Albanian media erroneously reported had been chased by Serbs with dogs—drowned in the Ibar River in March 2004, touching off the riots. Now, the main bridge connecting the two halves of Mitrovica resembles cold war Checkpoint Charlie. Cement barricades force vehicles to drive a zigzag through the barriers, and miles of concertina wire stretch along both banks of the river. The only vehicles going across belong either to the United Nations or to KFOR. While the south of Mitrovica is a teeming city of some 90,000 people (nearly all Albanians), the north feels like a refugee encampment: Over the past five years, and during the riots, thousands of Serbs have come here for refuge. On the previously generous sidewalks, small kiosks set up by Serb refugees stand cheek by jowl. Virtually the only Albanians living on this side of the river are in three apartment blocks just left of the bridge, guarded by more KFOR troops, concertina wire, and sandbag bunkers.

In a converted high school gymnasium, I go to see Serb refugees displaced by the riots. There are 50 in all, sleeping

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on simple cots beneath basketball hoops. On one wall, a set of pull-up bars has been turned into a temporary clothes rack. A balance beam is being used as a divider to separate the cots of one family from another. Their houses, in a town south of Mitrovica, were destroyed by mobs but are now being rebuilt. Still, they won't go home. "Ninety-nine-point-nine percent of us will not return because the U.N., KFOR, and the police have not been able to guarantee our safety," Krsto Todorović, a 58-year-old, tells me. "We are asking for safety. Only if that happens is there a chance we will go back. ... It's better that they just kill my wife and me because we have already lived our lives."

IN FACT, IT is not Kosovo but a neighboring region that is the Balkan success story. Of the past decade's three peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans—in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia—only one, in Macedonia, largely avoided the brutal, interethnic wars of the other two. In the case of Macedonia, international intervention came early, through mediation of the Ohrid peace agreement in 2001 that laid out a framework for dealing with minority rights before a full-scale civil war. In Kosovo and in Bosnia, the peace agreements were just holding arrangements that came only after wars had already begun and pogroms against minorities had started. "In Ohrid, the international community finally learned its lesson," agrees the new head of the U.N. mission in Kosovo, Søren Jessen-Petersen. But, for Kosovo, it is a lesson that has come too late. ■

The decline of Brand America.

Remaindered

BY CLAY RISEN

THERE ARE FEW things more American than Nestlé Toll House chocolate chips. In their distinctive yellow bag, complete with a logo invoking a New England inn, they have long been part of the domestic cliché. They recall moms baking cookies and children playing in suburban backyards. It's an image Nestlé carefully tends—the first thing a visitor to the Toll House website sees is the tagline, "A brand that America trusts has provided the best-tasting chocolate chips for over 50 years. Consistently delivering high quality, Nestlé Toll House has ensured warm and enjoyable moments for families across America." Which is why so many people are surprised to learn that Nestlé is not a U.S. company at all—rather, it's an enormous Swiss food conglomerate with operations across the globe.

Nestlé's ability to pass as American—without ever hiding its true identity behind a domestic subsidiary—has fast become a model for many U.S. companies and marketing executives. That's because, these days, being an American brand on the global market can be a liability. A disdain for U.S. products kindled by the anti-globalization sentiment of the late '90s has been stoked by the Bush administration's aggressive unilateralism and bald ties to corporate interests (which get even more play overseas than domestically). So it's no surprise that global consumers respond to what they see as U.S. imperialism by shunning brands that trumpet their American provenance. According to a December poll by Global Market Insite (GMI), 50 percent of respondents in Asia and Europe said they mistrust U.S. companies, and 20 percent said they consciously avoid U.S. goods. The poll caps a wealth of anecdotal evidence, including calls by politicians for boycotts and stories of European restaurants turning down U.S. credit cards.

So far, the response by U.S. businesses to anti-Americanism has been aimed primarily at changing the world's perception of "Brand America," marketing-speak for the country's international reputation. But, for many marketers, such campaigns are misdirected, insufficient, and shortsighted. Anti-Americanism isn't going away, they say, because it has become a part of the global consumer culture. "People are asking whether a brand conforms to their ideologies," says Naseem Javed, CEO of the marketing firm ABC Namebank. "This has never happened on such a grand scale. But, post-9/11, it has exploded." It's an enormous challenge for U.S. companies, which have long traded on their association with the land of free enterprise, abundant wealth, and unlimited consumption. Now, say marketers, if companies want to compete globally, they need to do the opposite: Get local. Brand America is dead. And that may not be such a bad thing.

ANTIPATHY TOWARD U.S. products has long been a staple of anti-American sentiment—witness 1960s French cultural critics bemoaning the "coca-colonization" of Europe. But such expressions were largely limited to Left Bank café chatter; in much of the world, U.S. products were not only cheap, fashionable, and of high quality, but they also carried with them an image of freedom and aspiration. Cowboys, movie stars, rock music—these were the icons of the United States, the modern incarnation of the American dream. Note Great Britain–based marketing experts Simon Anholt and Jeremy Hildreth in their book *Brand America*, "These brands were the wearable, affordable slice of America that young consumers worldwide could take away." Everyone wanted a piece of it, and, for decades after World War II, Madison Avenue advised its clients to sell America when selling abroad. Even foreign brands tried to buy into Americana—Brooklyn chewing gum, made in Milan, has been on Italian candy shelves for half a century.

But international affection for Brand America began to erode in the 1980s. On the one hand, globalization, far from erasing ethnic and national identities, has actually made them more apparent—and more important. *Financial*

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Times columnist Richard Tomkins wrote recently that "globalization led not to monoculturalism and a convergence of tastes but to the emergence of a global culture. ... [N]ow people can buy products from all over the world, expressing their preferences and indeed their identities by choosing from a vast array of local, regional and global brands." To many people, a world dominated by multinational corporations, many of them from the United States, is a world in which cultural diversity is under constant threat. Not surprisingly, many global consumers have concluded that one easy way to protest U.S. commercial dominance—and at the same time assert their own identity—is to eschew U.S. brands (even though, ironically, many of those products are now made in developing countries). On the other hand, the fall of communism, by ameliorating the tension between West and East, also undercut the symbolic power of American brands. "The gratitude has faded," write Anholt and Hildreth. "[T]he thrill and glamour of the original pop culture have worn off ... and good will has wasted away as America continues to interfere in other countries' affairs."

It was really only a matter of time, then, before American brands became lightning rods for protest. As one Scottish man, who forbids his son to drink Coke, told *The Financial Times* late last year, "I used to have a lot of respect for America; now there is mostly fear. ... You feel pretty powerless, but the one thing you can do is stop buying American products." Indeed, the wealth of polling data and anecdotal evidence showing a growing relationship between anti-Americanism and declining sales of U.S. products abroad is compelling. In 2003, several members of the European Parliament called for a global boycott of U.S. products, and, just last year, a group of German restaurants announced they were no longer accepting American Express. Surveys by market-research firms GMI, NOP World, and Research International have shown a pattern of distrust and anger with U.S. business; a 2004 Research International poll found that more than half of its Latin American respondents associate U.S. products with labor and environmental exploitation. An October 2004 poll by GMI found "a consistent direct correlation between how closely international consumers associate companies with the U.S. and the likelihood they'll avoid purchasing their brands in the near future." And, while such sentiment has been growing for years, some say it has gained new energy since the November elections. "For the last four years, people had a suspended disbelief about what was going on in America," says Jasmine Montgomery, executive strategy director for FutureBrand, a marketing firm. That's no longer true. As Montgomery says, "There has been a sea change about America abroad, and American companies have to deal with that."

The first and most obvious response to anti-Americanism has been to rebrand America. This has been a priority for more than just the business community—post–September 11 diplomacy recognizes the importance of international public opinion, particularly in the Middle East. But the business community has eagerly supported such efforts. Improve the flagship brand (the United States), the logic goes, and its subsidiary brands (U.S. icons like McDonald's, Coke, and Levi's) will be improved in the process. But, so far, the most visible effort, the creation of the State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs—first helmed by marketing maven Charlotte Beers and most recently taken up by Karen Hughes—has been met with near-universal derision. The right sees it as a sellout to global public opinion, while the left sees it as reinforcing the hypocrisy of the Bush administration's foreign policy. "America's problem is not with its brand," Naomi Klein, a veteran anti-corporate campaigner, wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, "but with its product." The rebranding mantle has also been taken up by a group of Madison Avenue execs called Business for Diplomatic Action (BDA), organized by marketing legend Keith Reinhard (best known as the guy behind the McDonald's "You Deserve a Break Today" campaign). But, so far, BDA has done little beyond distribute its "World Citizens Guides"—passport-sized etiquette manuals for young travelers—and organize a series of brainstorming conferences.

Neither the State Department's nor the BDA's efforts have produced much in the way of results, and that may have less to do with their flawed approach than with the fact that they are powerless to change the fundamentals of anti-Americanism. As Klein points out, the problem for the United States is less a matter of image than of policy and of the current structure of international relations—the world is angry with us not because it doesn't like cowboys, but because it doesn't like hegemons. And it doesn't help that, in a media-saturated global culture, our claims to be promoting democracy and freedom are undercut each time Al Jazeera broadcasts images from Abu Ghraib to its millions of viewers.

This is why many marketeering gurus and CEOs are ready to give up on trying to rebrand America. "What was a sort of gradual uprising against the march of Corporate America has turned into something much more profound," says Montgomery, "and I don't think the tables can be turned." So it's no surprise to hear many of the same marketers—and their corporate clients—calling for an entirely new strategy: Go local. Drop the images of cowboys and NBA stars. Hire local celebrities. Don't talk about how a hamburger bestows a little bit of America with every bite; instead, tailor its recipe to the regional cuisine. McCann-Erickson, a global ad agency, was one of the first to advise such a strategy; in 2003, it sent its U.S. clients a memo telling them to downplay their national ties and develop "strong local roots" abroad. More recently, GMI declared, "American multinational companies will need to mount a valiant effort to distance themselves from the image of the U.S. federal government and its unpopular foreign policies in the new year or risk continued brand erosion and ongoing boycotting."

Indeed, some companies have already implemented this strategy. "Spam has done that well, even though it is owned by [the American company] Hormel," says Allyson Stewart-Allen, director of the London firm International Marketing Partners. "The advertising they do isn't the American ad

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voiced over with accents, but [ones] created in local settings with local actors." Frederic Kropp, marketing professor at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California, singles out Heinz. "If you were to go to Britain, I bet 99 out of 100 customers would swear Heinz is a British brand," he says. "They don't emphasize their country of origin, just as if you were to go to Middle America and ask about Nestlé." And everyone remembers the classic scene at the beginning of *Pulp Fiction* in which John Travolta recounts how, in Paris, a Quarter Pounder with cheese is called a Royale with cheese, because "they got the metric system there, they wouldn't know what the fuck a Quarter Pounder is."

To be sure, these firms have been working on their "local" campaigns for years. But they, like Nestlé, are now seen as the models to follow rather than the odd men out. Nike no longer sells Michael Jordan and his hoop-star successors abroad; its European campaigns are all about local soccer celebrities. Budweiser runs ads in Great Britain that poke fun at American men. Pepsi may have taken the new anti–Brand America strategy the furthest: According to *The Economist*, the soft drink–maker has launched an ad campaign in Bahrain that builds up Coca-Cola as an American brand while positioning itself as the local favorite. "American executives are reluctant to put big chunks of money in carrying the flag forward," says ABC Namebank's Javed. Taken together, the message is clear: It no longer pays to sell America abroad.

SUCH ADVICE MAY at first sound unpatriotic and deeply cynical—responding to anti-Americanism by embracing it. But it's actually a positive development. As many marketers and CEOs have concluded, the United States is a country so powerful that even its most benevolent policies are likely to draw massive protest from some sector of the world community, a community that also happens to double as their consumer base. Why risk losing customers by associating themselves with such a volatile brand image? There are benefits for the U.S. government as well. Just as our unilateralist foreign policy casts a shadow over our exports, so, too, does our commercial image influence our international standing. "[W]hether we like it or not, commercial brands are increasingly performing the role of transmitting national culture," wrote Anholt in *The Journal of Brand Management*. "[B]rands are actually the means by which those consumers form their views about national identity in the first place." Sometimes this can be a good thing, such as when Swiss watches and cuckoo clocks reinforce Switzerland's image as an efficient and refined nation. But, too often, it can have negative connotations. Wal-Mart's anti-labor policies, Exxon's poor environmental record, McDonald's junk-food menu—none of these helps improve the image of the United States as a force for good in the world.

Ultimately, going local in a global economy is simply good business, regardless of the rise and fall of the U.S. government's international standing. "American companies are perceived here in Europe as insular and imposing their American templates and products and service ranges on consumers without assessing their appetite for them," says Stewart-Allen. "What this episode is hopefully helping American firms confront is that they need to be more tailored to their international markets." In other words, less Quarter Pounder, more Royale with cheese. ■

Giving George W. Bush his due on democracy.

The Politics of Churlishness

BY MARTIN PERETZ

IF GEORGE W. BUSH were to discover a cure for cancer, his critics would denounce him for having done it unilaterally, without adequate consultation, with a crude disregard for the sensibilities of others. He pursued his goal obstinately, they would say, without filtering his thoughts through the medical research establishment. And he didn't share his research with competing labs and thus caused resentment among other scientists who didn't have the resources or the bold—perhaps even somewhat reckless—instincts to pursue the task as he did. And he completely ignored the World Health Organization, showing his contempt for international institutions. Anyway, a cure for cancer is all fine and nice, but what about AIDS?

No, the president has not discovered a cure for cancer. But there is a pathology, a historical pathology, that he has attacked with unprecedented vigor and with unprecedented success. I refer, of course, to the political culture of the Middle East, which the president may actually have changed. And he has accomplished this genuinely momentous transformation in ways that virtually the entire foreign affairs clerisy—the cold-blooded Brent Scowcroft realist Republicans and almost all the Democrats—never thought possible. Or, perhaps, in ways some of them thought positively undesirable. Bush, it now seems safe to say, is one of the great surprises in modern U.S. history. Nothing about his past suggested that he harbored these ideals nor the qualities of character required for their realization. Right up to the moment Bush became president, I was convinced that his mind, at least on matters Levantine,

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belonged to his father and to James Baker III, whose worldview seemed to be defined by the pecuniary prejudice of oil and Texas: Keep the ruling Arabs happy. But I was wrong, and, in light of what has already been achieved in the Middle East, I am glad to say so. Most American liberals, alas, enjoy no similar gladness. They are not exactly pleased by the positive results of Bush's campaign in the Middle East. They deny and resent and begrudge and snipe. They are trapped in the politics of churlishness.

The achievements of Bush's foreign policy abroad represent a revolution in the foreign policy culture at home. The traditional Republican mentality that was so perfectly and meanly represented by Bush père and Baker precluded the United States from pressing the Arabs about reform—about *anything*—for decades. Not Iraq about its tyranny and its record of genocide, not Syria about its military occupation of Lebanon and its own brutal Baathist dictatorship, not Egypt about loosening the crippling bonds of a statist economy and an authoritarian political system, not Saudi Arabia about its championing of the Wahhabi extremism that made its own country so desiccated and the world so dangerous, and certainly not the Palestinians about the fantasy that they had won all the wars that they had actually lost and were therefore entitled to the full rewards due them from their victories. This was the state of U.S.-Arab relations in 2001: The United States was actually more frightened of the Arabs than they were of us. The extraordinary report of the 9/11 Commission about the delinquent reactions to the decade-long lead-up to the catastrophe of September 11 only confirms this impression of official U.S. pusillanimity.

The Clinton administration seized on every possible excuse—from the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, right through the atrocities in Kenya and Tanzania, to the attack on the USS *Cole*—not to respond meaningfully to Osama bin Laden. This aggressively dilatory approach was set early on, when Bill Clinton's first secretary of state, dead-man-walking Warren Christopher, proposed that a special bureau be set up to deal with drugs, crime, and terrorism in a single office, as if terrorism is a problem for policemen and not for strategists. The 9/11 Commission Report records that only congressional opposition aborted Christopher's concoction. Attorney General Janet Reno always worried about retaliation against any moves by the United States; Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, preoccupied with her "push for a peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis," was concerned that military strikes against the bin Laden operations in Afghanistan would strengthen the Taliban; National Security Adviser Sandy Berger fretted that a shoot-out might be seen as an assassination, and, always the trade lawyer, he consistently held out hope that some sort of carrot would turn the Taliban against bin Laden; General Anthony Zinni was more concerned about human rights abuses by the Taliban than by its hospitality to Al Qaeda and worried also that a mosque might be damaged in the course of bombing operations; Pentagon officials warned that a missile aimed at bin Laden might kill a visiting Emirati prince instead (but why was a UAE prince hanging out with bin Laden anyway?); and CIA Director George Tenet had so many objections to decisive action that it would be nearly impossible to enumerate them.

Clinton, it is true, resolved to eliminate bin Laden, but soon he eliminated his desire to eliminate him. The Clinton administration's true desire was to arrest bin Laden, to indict him, and to put him on trial—to "bring him to justice," as these men and women pompously exhorted each other. Except Berger also feared that bin Laden would be acquitted in a U.S. court of law. CIA personnel trying to cut a deal with the Northern Alliance to capture bin Laden warned that, if the Afghan "tribals"—that's the orientalism of liberals—did not bring him in alive but, heaven forbid, actually killed him, they would not be paid for their labors. The charismatic leader of the Afghan opposition and our best contact with it, Ahmed Shah Massoud, who was assassinated two days before September 11, thought he was dealing with madmen.

The new Bush presidency also found it hard to wrap its hands around the Al Qaeda phenomenon and preferred to focus instead on Star Wars redivivus—until, of course, a catastrophe in Lower Manhattan concentrated its mind. What the Bush administration gradually came to realize was that fighting the Muslim terrorist international could not be done in a vacuum. If the Islamic and Arab orbits were to continue to revolve around sanguinary tyrannies, there would be no popular basis in civil society to rob the cult of suicidal murder of its prestige. So, rather than being a distraction from the struggle against the armed rage suffusing these at once taut and eruptive polities, confronting their governments was actually intrinsic to that struggle. The Bush administration recognized that removing the effect means removing the cause. The 9/11 Commission seems to have grasped this, too, at least in its citations of Richard Clarke's assertion that bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, Al Qaeda and the Iraqi Baath could be natural allies.

HISTORY HAS NEVER traveled in the Middle East as fast as it has during the last two years. In this place where time seems to have stopped, time has suddenly accelerated. It may be true (more likely, it is not) that a deep yearning for democracy has been latent throughout the region for a long time. There certainly was a basis in reality for skepticism about the Arabs' hospitability to the opening of their societies. Whatever the proper historical and cultural analysis of the past, however, the fact is that democracy did not begin even to breathe until the small coalition of Western nations led by the United States destroyed the most ruthless dictatorship in the area.

Democracy in Mesopotamia? A fantasy, surely. But not quite. Iraq was, despite its unbelievably bloody history, a rather sophisticated place. During the nineteenth century, many Baghdadis went abroad to study. Modern nationalism sank some roots. Baghdad itself had a plurality of Jews, learned and mercantile, until they fled to the new state of

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Israel. An ancient minority of Christians survived into the age of Sunni pogroms and survives—though in lesser numbers—still. The Kurds grew relatively tolerant in the areas they dominated. And the majority Shia, though viciously persecuted from the founding of the Iraqi state after World War I—with the not-so-passive consent of the British colonials—and condemned to near-genocide by Saddam's revolutionary republic, have generally maintained the restraint that piety sometimes allows. After a year and a half of nearly daily Sunni bloodletting among them, the Shia have not wreaked the vengeance they surely could and, equally as surely, some of them long to take.

The U.S. liberation-occupation has now tried to cobble together these diverging Iraqis into the beginnings of a democratic regime. Wonder of wonders, these estranged cousins have shown some talent in the art of compromise; and trying to make this polity work is hardly an effort undertaken without courage. The judge who was killed with his son outside his home on his way to work at the tribunal that will try Saddam knew that danger stalked him, and so did the rest of the victims of Sunni bloodlust. This bloodlust evokes an unmistakable but macabre schadenfreude among many critics of the war, who want nothing of history except to be proved right. It is as if suicide bombings and other sorts of helter-skelter murder were a just judgment on the wrongdoings—yes, there have been wrongdoings, some of them really disgusting—of the Bush administration. And, even if ridding western Asia of Saddam is reluctantly accepted as justified, what blogger couldn't have accomplished what came after more deftly?

In any case, this churlish orthodoxy tells us that the Sunnis need to be enticed into the political game lest it be deemed illegitimate. In this scenario, it is the murderers who withhold or bestow moral authority. John F. Burns, the defiantly honest *New York Times* journalist in Baghdad, who has consistently reported the ambiguous and truly tangled realities of the war, now sees the Baathist and Sunni warriors in retreat, if not actually beaten. What will probably happen in Iraq is a version of what endured for decades in Lebanon: a representative government rooted in sect—argumentative, perhaps even corrupt, but functioning. Lebanon was never perfect, but it worked reasonably well, until the aggressive Palestinian guests took to commanding Shia turf to establish a "state within a state." (This was a phenomenon that the nimble Thomas L. Friedman did not much report on in the first leg of his journey *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, confiding that fear for his life and livelihood kept him from deviating too far from the Palestinian story as they wanted it told. Eason Jordan *avant la lettre*.)

The fine fruits of the Bush administration's indifference to international opinion may be seen now in Lebanon, too. What is happening there is the most concrete intra-Arab consequence of the Iraq war. Nothing could be done in Lebanon without Syria's sanction, no government decision without the approval of Damascus, no business without a hefty Damascene percentage. Syrian troops and spies were everywhere. Lebanese of all sects and clans have been restive for years. But they lived in the fearful memory of their mad civil war, the civil war of the daily car bombs in the marketplace. Suddenly, the elections in Iraq, Bush's main achievement there, exhilarating and inspiring, sprung loose the psychological impediments that shackled the Lebanese to Syria. Even if the outcomes will not be exactly the same, this was Prague and Berlin at the end of the long subjugation to their neighbor to the east. More immediately, this was Kiev only a few months ago. The first mass protest against the Syrians and their satrap prime minister drew tens of thousands. Then there was the much larger crowd of pro-Syria Shia from the south, a disconcerting moment. But, after that, a multitude so huge that it defied counting, and so diverse. This was the true cedar revolution, a revolution of the young, for independence, for freedom from the failing but always brutal Damascus regime next door. Will Vladimir Putin be so stupid as to invest credit and arms in the stiff and callow son of Hafez Al Assad?

None of this happened by spontaneous generation. Yes, there were lucky breaks: Yasir Arafat died, Syria conspired somehow to have former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri assassinated. And yes, the new directions are young, and the autocratic-theocratic political culture of the Middle East is old, and it is once again too early to proclaim that the mission has been accomplished. As the ancient Israelite king observed, let he who girds his harness not boast as he who takes it off. But the mission is nonetheless real, and far along, and it is showing thrilling accomplishments. It is simply stupid, empirically and philosophically, to deny that all or any of this would have happened without the deeply unpopular but historically grand initiative of Bush. The hundreds of thousands of young people in Martyrs' Square knew that they had Bush's backing. The president seems even to have enticed Jacques Chirac into a more active policy toward Lebanon: For him, too, Syria had to go. If this satisfies Chirac's yearning for *la gloire*, so be it. (But it will not be so easy to maintain such alliances: Already, Security Council members are said to be working up plans to put the future of Lebanon under the protective care of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, when nothing in UNIFIL's past—nothing—should provide confidence that it is able, or even disposed, to act decisively against Arab brutality.)

What is occurring in Saudi Arabia and Egypt is also heartening, if more than a bit tentative. Under pressure from the Bush administration, the Saudis have allowed the first local elections in the country's history: an election to bodies that cannot make big decisions, and an election limited to male voters, naturally. But infidels (that is, Shia) may also vote. By Saudi standards, this is the revolution of 1848. In Egypt, responding to the insistence of the Bush people, President Hosni Mubarak has allowed that he will permit opponents to run in the presidential elections against him. Mubarak has no chance of losing . . . this time. Maybe, how-

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ever, the son will not be the father's inevitable successor, and maybe the Arab custom of turning dictatorships into dynasties will also come to an end, at least in Cairo. And, in the brave figure of Ayman Nour, the world now has a hero of the anti-Mubarak forces to celebrate and to support. In both countries, to be sure, what we are seeing are the bare beginnings of a democratic process, the very bare beginnings. It will be years, maybe decades, before these become democratic polities. And there is always the chance—as was the case in Algeria, once the jewel in the shabby crown of the "nonaligned"—that the vox populi will vote wrong. In the Algerian instance, it had to vote wrong: The choice was between national fascists and pious fascists. Take your pick.

So the situation is certainly complex. But complexity is not a warrant for despair. The significant fact is that Bush's obsession with the democratization of the region is working. Have Democrats begun to wonder how it came to pass that this noble cause became the work of Republicans? They should wonder if they care to regain power. They should recall that Clinton (and the sanctimonious Jimmy Carter even more so) had absolutely no interest in trying to modify the harsh political character of the Arab world. What they aspired to do was to mollify the dictators—to prefer the furthering of the peace process to the furthering of the conditions that make peace possible. The Democrats were the ones who were always elevating Arafat. He was at the very center of *their* road map. After he stalked out of a meeting room in Paris during cease-fire talks in late 2000, Albright actually ran in breathless pursuit to lure him back. It was the Democrats who perpetuated Arafat's demonic sway over the Palestinians, and it was the Democrats who sustained him among the other Arabs. And so the cause of Arab democracy was left for the Republicans to pursue. After September 11, the cause became a matter also of U.S. national security.

The great diversion from the real politics of the Arab countries, and from the prospect of political reform, was the Palestinian grievance against Israel. In the early years of their conflict with the Zionists, the Palestinians thought that these countries would fight their battles for them, at the negotiating table and on the battlefield, which they did. But what happened in reality was that the various Arabs exploited the Palestinians as pawns in their own ambitions to pick off pieces of Palestine for themselves. That is why there was no Palestinian state in the West Bank or Gaza after the armistice of 1949, as one might have expected from the Partition Plan of 1947. The West Bank was annexed to Jordan. Gaza was not annexed but administratively attached to Egypt. Syria's armies won no decisive battles against the Jews; otherwise, they also would have taken a piece of Palestine. In any event, until the Six Days War, the Palestinian groan against the Jews was focused on the very existence of Israel within narrow and perilous borders, without strategic depth, without old Jerusalem, without the West Bank, without Gaza.

And Arab governments deflected the ample internal plaints of their own peoples with mobilized hysteria against the Jews. Every domestic grievance was dispersed with rousing rhetoric against Israel. The sun of Gamal Abdel Nasser rose and set with Cairo's failures in its wars with Israel. Hatred of the Zionists levitated the Baath dictatorships of both Iraq and Syria. In the end, after five wars and two intifadas, the Palestinians still seethed. But it had all come to nothing. And, finally, the angel of death unilaterally attacked Arafat. Bush had had the good sense to pay no attention to him, despite the urgent imprecations of the usual apologists: the European Union, the United Nations, France, Russia, and the editorial page of the *Times*. Had Bush made even a single accommodation to Arafat, Arafat's way in the world would have been enshrined in Palestinian lore for yet another generation as the only way.

But Bush didn't, and Ariel Sharon didn't, either. Now that there is some real hope among both Israelis and Palestinians about the future, let us examine the reasons for it. The first is that Bush made no gestures to the hyperbolic fantasies of Palestinian politics. He gave them one dose of reality after another. The second is that he gave Israel the confidence that he would not trade its security for anything—which means that Israel is now willing to cede much on its own. (Israeli dovishness for American hawkishness: This was always the only way.) The third is that Bush is holding Sharon to his commitments, and everyone who is at all rational on these issues now sees the Israeli prime minister as a man of his word and a man of history. After all, Sharon has broken with much of his own political party. Not for nothing is he now the designated assassination target of the Israeli hard right. Still, holding Sharon to his word also means holding Mahmoud Abbas to his. So far, the record is mixed. The serious shutting down of the terrorist militias has not yet begun, but the Palestinian Authority did run reasonably free local elections, and they were not accompanied by killing. It is true that Hamas won more of these races than makes either Sharon or Abbas comfortable, and its strength may even increase in the coming parliamentary voting. But this, too, is a part of the gamble of democracy; and, to the extent that the Palestinians are taking this gamble and following the newest fashion among the other Arabs, it is a tribute to the inked purple fingers of Iraq, which is to say, a tribute to Bush and his simplistic but effective trust in the polling place.

It has been heartening, in recent months, to watch some Democratic senators searching for ways out of the politics of churlishness. Some liberals appear to have understood that history is moving swiftly and in a good direction, and that history has no time for their old and mistaken suspicion of American power in the service of American values. One does not have to admire a lot about George W. Bush to admire what he has so far wrought. One need only be a thoughtful American with an interest in proliferating liberalism around the world. And, if liberals are unwilling to proliferate liberalism, then conservatives will. Rarely has there been a sweeter irony. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Two Suburbs

THE TWO LEADING ACTORS in **THE UPSIDE OF ANGER** are so good that their performances, even more than the story they are in, keep us interested. Kevin Costner, who has played baseball stars, here is an ex-baseball star. His character, Denny Davies, has some resemblance to Jack Nicholson's ex-astronaut in *Terms of Endearment*: a man who peaked early in fame and income. Denny is now exploiting his past as a radio personality. Drinking fairly steadily with booze as both anesthetic and fuel, pleasant and tolerant, he is faced with the problem of living out the rest of his life. With no dram of self-pity, Denny takes us along with him on his wryly barren way.

THE UPSIDE OF ANGER
(New Line)

NINA'S TRAGEDIES
(Wellspring)

Joan Allen is Terry Wolfmeyer, the mother of four daughters, three of them in their teens, one graduating from college. Terry's husband has just left her. This is not a financial bump—she lives in a sleek suburb of Detroit and never worries about money—but the shock shrinks her emotional range. She lives within a narrow spectrum of argument and rage; her rare tender moments seem willed. Allen, as her work in *The Crucible* and *Ethan Frome* and as Pat Nixon in Oliver Stone's film made very clear, is an intelligent and sure actress. The role of Terry is tough because of the relatively few colors: Allen knows that careful grading is essential, and she brings it all off flawlessly.

A third major role is Denny's radio producer, Shep Goodman: a fortyish man, clever, who has worked out a rationale for his solipsism. Shep is played by Mike Binder, who directed this film and wrote the screenplay: his acting and directing are better than his writing. The dialogue is snappy enough all along, but as the film progresses we begin to sense television taking over.

Which means we become increasingly aware that, between the beginning and the end of the story, the author is burdened with time that has to be filled. In television we can often see that the writer, worried about the half-hour or hour or whatever it is that must be occupied, scrounges up episodes to fill that space. It is unusual for a television piece, especially a chapter of a series, to have a through line that moves inexorably from start to finish. Binder has been a television writer. Here he had a two-hour space to fill, and we see him somewhat desperately filling it.

Denny and Terry know each other. He doesn't make moves on her after her husband leaves: he simply is present a good deal of the time, drinking (quite a lot) with her, talking. Eventually they do begin an affair, but it is somewhat sporadic. The progress of their affair isn't sufficient stuff for a film, so Binder uses Terry's daughters to fill the space—a desperate illness, a sudden marriage, an attempt at first-time sex, a calculated seduction by an older man. There is also some bungee jumping, including a nighttime accident so gross that it bruises the relatively slick ambience of the film.

But all this patent padding would have some textural interest were it not for a last-minute revelation that makes nonsense of the Terry-Denny story. In his miniaturizing way Binder has been trying to deal perceptively with his people, but the finish smashes everything. It is as if a man who has carefully built a structure adds one last touch that destroys it.

In a way, the collapse of *The Upside of Anger* matters. The middle class, which is this story's social locus, has become the center of American film—partly because the middle class has enlarged. The working class no longer exists. (When was the last time a politician used the term "working class"? Obviously this means that the men and women who were once proud to be called working class now want to be called middle.) Numerous films—*The Ice Storm*, *American Beauty*, *We Don't Live Here Anymore* are only three of them—have explored, with varying success, this enlarged bourgeoisie, viewing it as the ethical landscape of our lives. Allen and Costner—and Binder the actor—paint in a small corner of that landscape until the film disintegrates.

A fourteen-year-old Israeli boy named Nadav says of his father's funeral: "I wore sunglasses so people couldn't see that I wasn't crying." The complexities behind that remark, attended by other complexities, are the subject of **NINA'S TRAGEDIES**. Written and directed by Savi Gabizon, who teaches film-making at Tel Aviv University, this picture explores a bourgeoisie comparable to the American one that we know, yet markedly different. Two facts differentiate it: the chill of terrorism, lurking just outside the sleek modern homes in a Tel Aviv suburb, and the religious schism. Nadav's mother is a swinging fashion designer; his father is a Hasid. They have divorced, and the boy lives with his mother.

Her sister is the Nina of the title. Nina is an editor at a publishing house, and when her husband is killed by terrorists, her sister sends Nadav to live with her as a comfort. Since Nina is lovely and Nadav is fourteen, he is entranced. After a while, another man enters Nina's life; also some story strands that Nadav has brought with him begin to grow. Gabizon's view of screenwriting is double. In narrative method, much of the picture is more or less what we would have expected in any American picture, yet some of the story spins out in unexpected tangential episodes. Those episodes never seem television padding à la Binder: they suggest a fireside storyteller remembering things that he must include in his account.

Gabizon has wit: a wobbly wheel on a funeral bier is good for a chuckle. He has a sense of imminence: one evening, sex is interrupted by news of a death. He

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has a sense of the caprices of the brain: Nina eventually confesses her shame that she thought the soldier who brought her terrible news, a man called Avinoam, was sexy. Overall *Nina's Tragedies* is another instance of a subject discussed here lately—a foreign film that is seen one way at home and another way abroad. To Israelis, who have loaded this picture with prizes, it evidently dramatizes the familiar. In this country Gabizon's film has novelty: it brings us a Western quality in Israeli life that is absent from the recurrent stark news.

Ayelet July Zurer is affecting as Nina, Alon Aboutboul is quietly rugged as Avinoam, and Aviv Elkabets fills the bill as Nadav. Gabizon's talent fixes the sophistication-cum-brutality that he is after; and the cinematography by David Gurfinkel, with its illuminating shadows, helps Gabizon greatly. ■

JED PERL ON ART
Utopian Designs

THE DECORATIVE ARTS HAVE always been art history's attractive orphans. While many people have a great affection for certain textiles or ceramics, the scholarly world embraces such objects only fitfully, as if they were really somebody else's responsibility. And much of the attention that is given to the decorative arts—in the shelter magazines, in the auction catalogues, and in specialized studies of rococo hardware or medieval ceramic tiles—has an edge about it, a feverishness that can suggest overcompensation and even overkill. The steady, sober attention that art historians bring to Seurat or Degas will never be enough to make the case for the work of a ceramicist or a furniture designer, no matter how important it is. The greatest paintings and sculptures stand their ground, sure of their ancestry and confident of their progeny. The greatest Arts and Crafts table or Art Nouveau vase remains an art historical conundrum—a party crasher. There will always be somebody to say, Why this? The case will always have to be made.

THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT IN EUROPE AND AMERICA
(Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

Some of the arguments on behalf of the decorative arts have been made by figures of extraordinary intellectual authority. John Ruskin, in the course of composing his grandly symphonic *The Stones of Venice*, discovered a map of the medieval temperament buried deep in the stonemason's patterns and arabesques. And by the end of the nineteenth century, the study of the decorative arts, which Ruskin did so much to promote, had become part of the foundation on which several generations of critics and scholars staged the formalist revolution in the arts. To cast a spotlight on decoration could suggest a downplaying of representation and figuration and narration, those mainstays of European art. Alois Riegl saw that it might be possible to decode the artistic spirit of an age through a study of Roman metalwork rather than marble sculpture. And Roger Fry and Clive Bell, the avatars of significant form, argued that the powers of color and shape were as evident in a Pre-Columbian textile or a Chinese pot as in a fresco by Giotto or a painting by Cézanne.

The work of Riegl, Fry, and Bell had a way of shifting attention from the old idea of the artist as a hero who determines the course of history. Not surprisingly, in recent years the writings of Riegl and other pioneering students of the decorative arts have found favor among art historians, who see in these studies, with their emphasis on the labors of anonymous craftspeople, a bracingly anti-authoritarian view of creativity. This emphasis on the decorative arts can also seem to confirm a postmodern belief that the author has died and the work of art is the impersonal product of historical forces, an inscrutable object to be deciphered. The reign of theory has given certain objects—ceramics produced in early Soviet Russia or textiles from the Wiener Werkstätte—a quirky hipness, a bohemian-antiquarian allure. It is now possible to regard the decorative arts as art history's glamorous outsiders. And so we have another kind of special pleading for the decorative arts, with the art historians whose attitudes have been shaped by the *October* magazine crowd taking the place of the ladies and gentlemen who attend the meetings of the William Morris Society.

ALL THIS SPECIAL PLEADING IS surely preferable to the hucksterism that is sometimes used to promote the decorative arts in the major museums. There is almost invariably more substance to small decorative arts shows in commercial galleries—or to the beautiful exhibitions at the Bard Graduate Center in New York—than to the offerings in the most heavily publicized venues. When the decorative arts go mainstream, they frequently lose their density and their power. They become a fancy parenthesis to painting and sculpture, a glittering sideshow. Five years ago I had planned to write about "Art Nouveau: 1890–1914," which originated at the Victoria and Albert and came to the National Gallery in Washington, but I found it impossible to get beyond the exhibition's mixture of swagger and peevishness. The organizers seemed to imagine that all they could do was seduce the public—and the result, as a visitor went from room to room, was little more than a display of conspicuous consumption. That Art Nouveau was one of the great sea changes in sensibility, that it commanded the energies of some of the best minds of the fin-de-siècle, and had been studied by some of the finest scholars of the mid–twentieth century, and written about by a literary figure of the originality of Cyril Connolly—none of this counted. The exhibition suggested a luxury department store with the price tags removed.

While any first-rate exhibition in a major museum is a cause for celebration, the appearance of a great decorative arts show is always a miracle. And there is no other way to describe the panoramic study of the Arts and Crafts movement that has been presented this winter at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Here we find the same union of seriousness and authority and beauty that we know from the finest exhibitions of painting and sculpture. I cannot imagine a show that would be more difficult to do than "The Arts and Crafts Movement in

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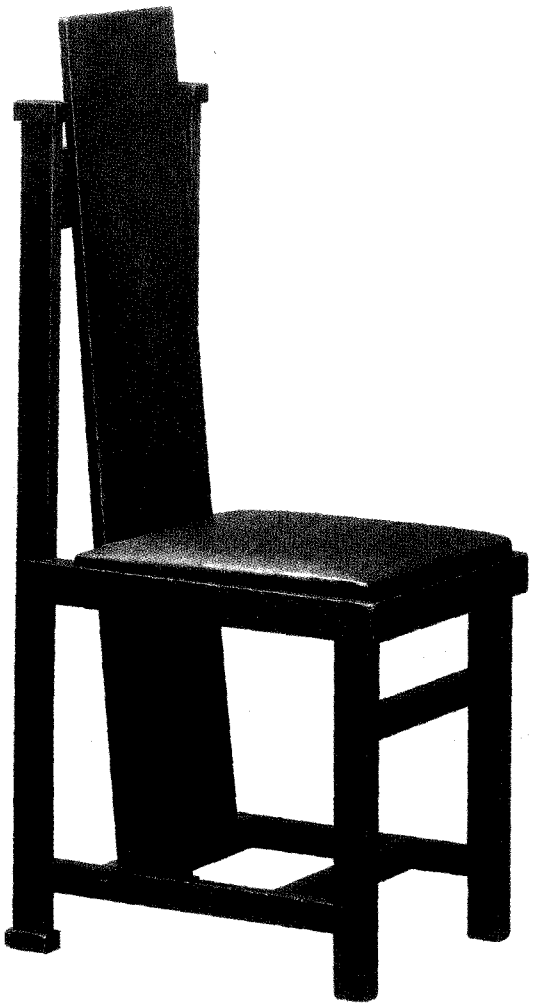
Europe and America," which ranges from the 1880s to the 1920s, and covers developments in more than half a dozen countries, and grapples with questions that are aesthetic, social, and historical in nature. Indeed, the presentation in Los Angeles is so compelling and so seamless that some viewers may miss the scale of the achievement. One has to remind oneself of the difficulties that have confronted an extraordinary curator, Wendy Kaplan, and an extraordinary patron, Max Palevsky. Kaplan has dedicated her professional life to the Arts and Crafts movement; she mounted "'The Art That Is Life': The Arts and Crafts Movement in America" at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1987. Palevsky, a key collector in this field and a staunch supporter of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, has supplied not only some of the finest works on display, but also the financial wherewithal to bring works from all corners of Europe and to install them exquisitely. (The show travels to the Milwaukee Art Museum and the Cleveland Museum of Art, while another exhibition devoted to the Arts and Crafts movement is opening at the Victoria and Albert in London this spring.)



COURTESY LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, *side chair*, Oak Park, Illinois, circa 1904

THIS EXHIBITION HAS the breadth, the pace, the sense of overarching ideas and enriching particulars, that one associates with a great historical novel. While it is true that the Arts and Crafts movement helped to shape the look of the modern world, it is equally true that the movement was grounded in a wide-ranging critique of modernity. The movement began in England, with William Morris, one of those larger-than-life figures—at once an artist, a prophet, and an entrepreneur—who flourished in the turbulent atmosphere of nineteenth-century Europe. While Morris's densely worked floral designs for wallpaper and fabrics defined a new kind of visual luxuriance, his arguments for social and aesthetic reform ushered in what became a worldwide crusade against the depersonalization and the routinization that many artists and writers saw as the result of a century of technological progress.

The peculiar situation of the Arts and Crafts movement was that it was, all at once, antiquarian in its admiration for an artisanal past, conservative in its fascination with agrarian societies, nationalist in its emphasis on local traditions, populist in its support of socialist ideals, and avant-gardist in its daring aestheticism. The complexities of the movement reflected and refracted the entangled yearnings for aesthetic and social transformation that had animated the writings of Ruskin, a man whose immensely intricate and conflicted vision echoed through all the decades of the Arts and Crafts movement. In the Los Angeles show, one feels how the difficulties of meeting so many different aspirations at once gave the movement its yearning, unstable, yeasty energies. A pioneering figure such as Morris, who can all too often strike us as a mummified prophet, as unreal as one of the Pre-Raphaelite confections that he admired, is here reclaimed as an experimentalist. The show catches the vehemence of the movement—its frantic energies, its wild idealism, its canny showmanship.

Kaplan's view of the Arts and Crafts movement is too lucid and too multidimensional ever to descend into mere prettiness. This is not to say that everything here is beautiful. There are some objects in this show—bits of overly intricate neo-medieval metalwork, for example—that are downright ugly. But nothing feels dusty or trivial. The story is framed by achievements that have received a good deal of attention in the past couple of generations. We begin in the United Kingdom, with strong representations of work done by William Morris and his various collaborators, including Edward Burne-Jones and Philip Webb, as well as by Charles Rennie Mackintosh. We conclude in the United States, with Frank Lloyd Wright and Greene and Greene. Certainly much of the German and Austrian material is familiar; Peter Behrens, Josef Hoffmann, and Koloman Moser have been the subjects of important books and exhibitions in recent years. But if a panoramic survey such as this can sometimes seem to downplay the work of the best-known artists, Kaplan has no interest in taking the role of the leveler. To see work by Wright and Hoffmann and Mackintosh in this show is rather like seeing work by Picasso and Miró in a survey of Surrealism: we know that the Arts and Crafts movement is only a part of Wright's story, just as Surrealism is only a part of Picasso's story.

And to the extent that Wright or Hoffmann has been incorporated into a larger story, this expansive perspective can help us appreciate the work of less well-known artists, whose achievements are magnified in the context. The excitement of this rigorous exhibition has everything to do with Kaplan's ability to show how ideas moved across Europe, and how they were transformed as they

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came into contact with local traditions, and how the interaction of new ideas with old forms—and with the pressures of production, both by hand in workshops and in factories of various sizes and varieties—created a loosening of conventional ideas about the look of a chair, a table, a vase, a rug. The marvelous catalogue, published by Thames and Hudson, includes half a dozen essays by scholars from various European countries, so that we see how the differing rates of industrialization and democratization across Europe affected aesthetic developments—even as, all over the continent, the movement forced fundamental reconsiderations of the relationship of form and function.

GREAT MUSEUM INSTALLATIONS such as this one are as rare as great productions of theatrical classics, for they require not only an absolute respect for the freestanding value of the work of art but also a sure sense of the contemporary mood. The museum curator, like the theatrical director, has to figure out how to lead the public to the work—and then accommodate the public—without distorting the subject. Kaplan obviously has this gift. Even as we are being urged to experience the singular beauty of works of decorative art—their timeless aspect, if you will—we are saturated in the atmosphere and the ambience of a range of periods and places. The galleries have been painted in a series of deep, resonant, earthy hues. And the mingling of furnishings with a variety of supporting materials helps to fill out the social dimensions of the story. There are collections of printed matter—books and catalogues and magazines, which are often works of decorative art in their own right—and these give us a sense of the intellectual ferment of the time, not to mention the Arts and Crafts movement's marketing strategies. There are just enough reproductions of period photographs to help us reconstruct the world from which these objects emerged. It is important to have a glimpse of a piece of furniture in a major turn-of-the-century exhibition, or to see the faces of the people who created all these tables and chairs.

Among the essential aspects of the story that we see emerging all across Europe and the United States are the experimental utopian communities, generally in rural settings, to which artists and other assorted idealists retreated in order to purify their lives and pursue aesthetic and social goals. As you look at the photographs of these communities, anybody who has read *The Blithedale Romance* or is old enough to have heard the stories that came back from the communes in the late 1960s and early 1970s will know how complicated, tangled, and often unsatisfactory such experiments can be. I feel the conflicts raging just beneath the surface of these sepia-toned images. Gödöllő, a Hungarian community in the first years of the new century, is particularly fascinating. Almost all the arts and crafts were practiced by the men and women at Gödöllő, who gathered there to reclaim some essence of the old Hungarian spirit, a magic that was secreted in medieval legends and in folk art conventions. A photograph of Sándor Nagy's house has an inviting spareness: this is the proverbial clean and well-lit place of modern longings, with the curved patterning of boards on the staircase and various pieces of imaginatively shaped furniture providing some witty asides.

There is a storybook quality to the interiors at Gödöllő. Mariska Undi's studio, with its displays of folk art and its brilliantly colored and figured textiles, looks like a toy shop or a playroom. And then there is Undi herself, a striking woman decked out in elegant peasant regalia, a grown-up at the center of this fantasy. One doesn't need to know much of anything about Gödöllő to suspect that the colonists' yearnings for simplicity were fueled by various forms of egomania—and that the mix could be combustible. This show is a wonderful saga of realists and idealists, of craftspeople, polemicists, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, wholesalers, retailers, and even to some extent a paying public. Kaplan provides us with glimpses of different aspects of the Arts and Crafts movement in a variety of countries; and these glimpses are so expertly mosaicked together that the result is a striking, enveloping, altogether convincing panorama.

KAPLAN HAS INVESTIGATED the holdings of far-flung museums and collections, and some of the material that she has come up with is virtually unknown. Taken together, the works on display announce a dramatic turn in European taste. Before the advent of the Arts and Crafts movement, the epitome of craft had been a kind of suavity—an ability to reshape wood or clay or metal, to give it a new life. In the greatest Arts and Crafts work, however, craft sheds its craftiness—or at least it tries to. Of course transformation is not unheard of in the Arts and Crafts movement—the vegetal forms made of wood or metal can sometimes rival the illusionist panache of the achievements of the rococo. But with the Arts and Crafts movement the focus of craftsmanship shifts, for it is the inherent character of materials—the grain of wood, the texture of clay—that is pushed to the fore. Like the forthrightness of the modern movement in painting—like Courbet's use of the palette knife, or Manet's undisguised brushwork—the forthrightness of the Arts and Crafts movement was grounded in a reaction against the artificiality of modern culture. There are delightfully plainspoken objects included here, such as a chair by Heinrich Vogeler with an owl cut into its back and a rush seat: not a masterwork, but an object with its own funny simplicity. And certain ceramics—a soup plate from the Zsolnay Factory in Hungary, with a pattern of vigorously stylized leaves—have a winning directness. I especially admired a dresser designed around 1905 by Ambrose Heal; one feels that all Heal wants to do is to allow his fine planks to display their lovely grain, and indeed this seems to be enough.

The movement rejected the decorative arts vocabulary that the Renaissance had inherited from the Greco-Roman world, and this rejection necessitated a search for new forms of honesty—a search that brought its own dangers. Any wholesale re-invention of taste is an invitation for bad taste to flourish, and the Arts and Crafts movement was no exception. The nationalist interests that inspired many craftspeople could lead to an indiscriminate embrace of local history. The Irish were besotted by Celtic patterning and the Scandinavians were eager to study the Viking antiquities that were only beginning to be pulled from the ground; and some of the work that resulted is, at least to my eyes, little more than exquisitely crafted kitsch. Lars Kinsarvik's Viking armchair, in blue painted wood, is a hoot. If it were just a joke it might be lovable, but Kinsarvik is in earnest. He has gotten carried away with his antiquarian studies, and the result is a Viking cartoon rendered in three dimensions. I also wish that the movement had

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been quicker in getting over William Morris's infatuation with maidens in long dresses and long tresses. Their stylish virginity is never very convincing, and they seem to crop up in one or another version in every country where the impact of Arts and Crafts was felt. These ethereal lovelies—weak-kneed rehashings of earlier high art conventions, of the maidens on the Parthenon frieze and the young things who accompany Botticelli's Venus and Primavera—were the movement's soft-core porn.

THERE CAN BE SOMETHING TERribly cozy and conventional about the Arts and Crafts movement, so much so that we have to remind ourselves that at its core it was radically anti-traditional. While many of the movement's innovations in design involved a search for new or untapped sources—in the arts of the Middle Ages or in one or another heretofore overlooked national tradition—what was most exciting was the determination to reject anything that could be regarded as a highly sophisticated or self-conscious design tradition, even one as far from classical models as the work of the monks who created the Book of Kells. The Arts and Crafts movement was generally most persuasive when it drew its inspiration from vernacular traditions that were, until the late nineteenth century, little more than a shadow kingdom in the history of art and design. It is terrifically affecting to see craftspeople looking for inspiration in the interior of a farmhouse or in the flowers of a field—and attempting to look at those forms without preconceptions, without recourse to the ways that designers might have interpreted them in the past.

The craftsman was considering the very fundamentals of craft and the very nature of seeing. In place of the traditional vocabulary of design, the Arts and Crafts movement offered a faith—sometimes a blind faith—in the process of making a thing. This was the movement's great dare. And the art of the past does indeed seem to be swept aside when you look at certain objects, such as an oak dining table made by Sidney Barnsley in the 1920s. Barnsley was one of a group of men who in the 1890s went to live in the Cotswolds and produce furniture that was based in part on country models. The legs and the trestle of Barnsley's table are made of substantial pieces of oak hewn into blunt yet modulated forms that suggest the articulated shapes of well-used farm implements.

Barnsley's table is substantial but not ponderous. Its wide surface and broad beams have a tensile excitement. And the simple diamond pattern that he has cut into the side of the top and allowed to run down the legs gives just the right touch of decorative articulation. This table is matter-of-fact and practical—but there is poetry in its practicality, too. One feels in the careful balancing of forms—in the suggestion of the shape of a rake in the trestle—a sculptural abstraction of the agrarian scene. Barnsley creates a complex reflection on the fascination with naturalness. The grain of the wood is open, frank, unabashed. Barnsley is seducing the materials, urging oak to reveal its true nature. And the honey-colored wood radiates its own quietly blissed-out aura. In Barnsley's table—and in many other works here—there is a new, bold sensuousness.

Some of the purest and most beautiful designs are in the Scandinavian section of the show. Akseli Gallen-Kallela's armchair, with its slender angular lines and high back, combines a sobriety and an austerity with a springiness, a lean power, that is a distillation of Art Nouveau. Carl Westman's armchair from around 1900 is almost Asian in the purity of its focus on plain wooden supports and simple joinery. There is a visual slowness to the chair. The individual elements—the finials at the top of the back, the intersections of planks and dowels—are not striking in and of themselves; what holds us is the deliberateness of the composition. The point does not seem to be to find new forms so much as to push the analysis of form back to the beginning of form. The viewer is given a sense of tradition being whittled away, reduced to its basics. The result is a kind of lightness, formal and emotional. We are back at the beginning of the chair, much as Brancusi, in his torso of a young man, takes us back to the beginning of figure sculpture.

ONE OF THE STRENGTHS OF Kaplan's encyclopedic approach to the Arts and Crafts movement is that she breaks through the parochialism that tends to infect the subject. Perhaps because so much of the important work on these artists has been done by people who see themselves as advocates, the achievement of Josef Hoffmann or Gustav Stickley can be enveloped in an uncomfortably polemical atmosphere. The evangelism that these men brought to their design work has turned out to be infectious, so that the exhibitions dedicated to their achievements, no matter how wonderful they may be, can have an off-puttingly aggressive atmosphere, as if you've stumbled into the meeting of a religious sect. The beauty of Kaplan's show is that at the very moment when we begin to feel that we are being strong-armed, we can turn a corner and discover another side of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Kaplan's approach emphasizes underlying or overarching themes. The German and Austrian work, which many of us tend to think of in its most resolutely, elegantly urban mode, is here revealed to have a countrified aspect as well, gorgeously represented in a dresser from Hoffmann's suite of furniture for Ernst Stöhr and in Hans Vollmer's invigoratingly succinct settee. Many resemblances among works produced in different places—the elongated forms, the curvilinear motifs—are surely the result of the rapid-fire international exchange of ideas that characterized this fast-developing movement. But there is also a suggestion in this exhibition that some of the formal affinities are grounded in a generally shared desire to remake the world in its most fundamental aspects—through an interest in the nature of clay, in the beauty of simple construction techniques, in the inherent properties of metal and wood.

THE STORY OF "THE ARTS AND Crafts Movement in Europe and America" closes in the years around World War I, but a museumgoer cannot help but flash forward. The revolutionary achievements of the Bauhaus and the entire history of twentieth-century Scandinavian design would be unimaginable without the Arts and Crafts movement. The design experiments in early Soviet Russia; the continuing interest in artisanal traditions in England after World War II; the fascination with pottery and weaving at Black Mountain College in the 1940s and all across America at mid-century; the current popularity of Ikea, where excellently designed bentwood furniture and glassware and rugs and lamps are sold at rock-bottom prices and are thus within the easy reach of a wide public: all of these developments are linked to

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The Holocaust: Sixty Years Later

Has the spirit of Auschwitz been revived?

Sixty years ago, the death camp of Auschwitz was liberated. That cursed place has come to symbolize the horror of the Holocaust. Best estimates are that in Auschwitz-Birkenau alone, over 1.5 million people, most of them Jews from many countries of Europe, were killed and burned. The resolve was "Never Again." But has the spirit of Auschwitz really died?

What are the facts?

Blood libel revisited: In medicine, certain diseases are believed to have been eradicated, but occasionally – decades later – some of them return, often with renewed savagery. The world thought that anti-Semitism, the horrible disease that had unleashed the Holocaust and its six million Jewish victims, had been overcome once and for all. But the virus of hatred that demonized Jews and that herded them to their deaths has revived and is again in full flourish.

Since the Holocaust and since the defeat of the Nazis, it is no longer acceptable openly to proclaim Jew-hatred – except in the Moslem countries. Print and broadcast media in virtually all Moslem countries convey the meanest anti-Semitic propaganda, in the same vein as that of the Nazis. Blood libel, the scandalous slander that Jews use the blood of Christians or Moslems for ritual purposes, mostly to bake their matzot, is circulating freely and widely believed. The Czarist forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is now a best seller in virtually all Moslem countries. And so is Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

> "Those who peddle anti-Semitism under the guise of anti-Israelism . . . better think again. There will be no second Holocaust—NEVER AGAIN!"

But in the "civilized" countries of Europe, anti-Semitism is disguised as the socially acceptable enmity toward Israel, the state of the Jews. Over 60 per cent of those polled in Europe assert that Israel is the greatest danger to the peace of the world (barely edging out the United States). The French ambassador to Great Britain referred to Israel as "that sh..ty little country" being the source of all the troubles of the world. Was he disciplined or removed by his government for this obscene outburst? Of course not!

Spirit of genocide: The Auschwitz spirit of 65 years ago that unleashed genocide in Europe did not perish with the Nazis. It is alive and well in many parts of the world, in which Adolf Hitler is still a hero. By now, most European nations – prominently France, Belgium, the Netherlands, but also Britain, Germany and the Scandinavian countries – have substantial Moslem populations. The goal of virtually all of them is the destruction of Israel. In that, they find a receptive audience in much of the European public, a public whose grandfathers were the perpetrator generation that killed six million Jews.

Can the barely disguised enmity toward Israel be explained by anything other than anti-Semitism? There are the crocodile tears over the alleged "occupation of Arab land" by the Israelis, the alleged mistreatment of the Arabs by the "brutal Israeli occupiers," the "cycle of violence," and the building of a fence to defend against marauding suicide bombers. But all that is hypocrisy, of course, a pretext to rationalize anti-Semitism.

The Europeans don't care about the more than a million blacks who were killed and continue to be killed in the Congo, the hundreds of thousands that were killed in Uganda and in Rwanda, the over two million farmers who were driven off their land in Darfur province in Sudan, and the hundred thousand killed by their Arab fellow citizens. No, it's only Israel that captures the attention of the world and of the United Nations, in which the vast majority of its Resolutions deal with the purported misdeeds of Israel.

Most of the world stands by as the Moslems, already armed to the teeth with the most advanced weapons, feverishly pursue the holy grail of nuclear armaments. Those weapons – freely conceded (at least in the case of Iran) have one purpose only, namely the destruction of Israel. The nations of Europe stand by, some of them secretly hoping perhaps that Israel, that sh..ty little country, will indeed be wiped from the face of the earth. Having committed the first Holocaust, or at least having stood by mostly approvingly, they now countenance with equanimity a second Holocaust, just as long as somebody else does the dirty work.

Israel is aware that its days would be numbered if any of its mortal enemies were to acquire nuclear weapons. Two or three such weapons, placed on the narrow coastal corridor of the country, would be the end of the Jewish state. But Israel will not allow that to happen. It is not going to sacrifice itself on the altar of world opinion. If Iran isn't stopped from acquiring nuclear weapons, there can be little question that, with or without the approval of the United States, Israel would have to preempt and, just as it destroyed the Osirak nuclear plant of Iraq in 1981, would destroy the Iranian nuclear installations – by whatever means it might take. This could quickly escalate to engulf and bring destruction to much of the Middle East. Those who peddle anti-Semitism under the guise of anti-Israelism and those who advocate to dismember Israel and fatally weaken it so as to make it defenseless, better think again. There will be no second Holocaust—NEVER AGAIN!

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the great sea change in visual and social consciousness that the Arts and Crafts movement inspired. Kaplan's achievement is to offer a definition of the movement that is elastic enough to embrace all these later developments.

"The Arts and Crafts movement," Kaplan explains, "could claim the adherence of progressives and conservatives, proponents of the handmade and of industrial production, as well as those who believed that 'the service of modern art' must include the revival of traditional crafts." People "invented the movement that they needed." William Morris could be seen as an opponent of the machine or as a hero of the new industrialism: "his acolytes interpreted him selectively." It is Kaplan's great point that far from pressing some one-note theory about the individuality of the craftsperson, the Arts and Crafts movement mounted a broad struggle to humanize industrial practices, to make them expressive, to value craft while acknowledging the difficulties of bringing quality objects to a wide audience without recourse to machine production of one sort or another. She presents, side by side, two works by the Belgian designer Gustave Serrurier-Bovy that show one man reaching for both elitist and populist forms of expression: his grandfather clock is an exquisite, unique luxury production, but his night table, complete with chamber pot, was designed to be produced inexpensively and sold in large quantities.

The complacency that we may sometimes associate with the back-to-nature side of the Arts and Crafts movement has no place in this exhibition. And the giants with whom we are so familiar—Wright and Hoffmann and Mackintosh—are knitted back into a story in which many other figures, such as Sidney Barnsley, turn out, at least for a moment, to shine nearly as brightly. It's not that Wright and Hoffmann are taken down a peg. Far from it. It's that a range of designers and craftspeople are pushed up high. The result is an exhibition that rejects the parochialism and the special pleading that are always turning the study of the decorative arts into a dead end in the history of art. The largeness of the view here brings us back to—and extends—a century of advances in the study of the decorative arts. Kaplan's achievement brings to mind a book such as Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design*, first published in 1936 (and just out in a new edition from Yale), or an exhibition such as the Museum of Modern Art's seminal "Art Nouveau: Art and Design at the Turn of the Century" in 1960. With this exhibition in Los Angeles, the Arts and Crafts movement reclaims its rightful place in the great sweep of modern art history. Art history's orphans have found their way home.

We see in the work gathered here—in its search for fundamentals, in its beguiling fantasies—the same dazzlingly complex simplicity that we see in the experiments of Vuillard and Brancusi and Matisse. And as museumgoers make these connections, they are going to find that they are also re-affirming one of art's oldest hopes: the dream of a unity of the arts. It is a dream that burned brightly for half a century in the communities where craftspeople met, in the workshops where they labored with wood and cloth and clay and metal, in the international expositions where they displayed the fruits of those labors, and in the elegant city shops where a sophisticated middle-class public came to admire the tables and chairs and rugs and ceramics through which a modern utopia was being defined. ■

Sherwin B. Nuland

After the Deluge

A report from a relief mission.

I AM NOT SURE JUST WHAT IT WAS that made me drop everything on December 31 and join six colleagues on a medical relief mission to Sri Lanka. At the moment I made the decision, it simply seemed like the right thing to do, and in retrospect it still does. But it turned out that the need for our small group was very different than we had anticipated: there was far less acute disease and injury than expected, but the human misery was of a sort that will require attention for years to come. In a strictly clinical sense, we accomplished far less than we had hoped. And yet it was important to be in that place at precisely that time. Ultimately, we did what doctors have always done, even before the Hippocratic physicians of ancient Greece enunciated their code of professional responsibility: we tried to help, as did so many others.

Six of us were doctors, the seventh being a young woman with degrees in public health. Like three others of our team, she had considerable experience in disaster areas located in various parts of the globe, and brought a perspective based not only on that but also on an overview of relief efforts within the context of large population groups and long-range problems. Before we left for home after two weeks in the refugee camps and seaside towns of the devastated country, we had all come to realize that the greatest contribution that can eventually be made to the people of Sri Lanka must come from a sober assessment not only of the long-term effects of the tsunami itself, but of the cruelly battered society and economy on which it visited its dreadful wrath. Disaster relief is only the most immediate kind of relief that this punished place requires.

Our entire time in the small island nation was attended by a series of strokes of circumstance conspiring to allow us not only the opportunity to bear witness to individual and collective tragedy, but also to confer with business and government officials, some of whose willingness to be candid in their assessment of their country's needs and problems was nothing less than astonishing, accustomed as several of us were to the usual blandness or obfuscation that characterizes such discussions, especially when they take place between public figures and virtual strangers who are thought to have some sort of waiting audience in their home countries. Our privileged situation came from two sources: our early arrival on the scene and the fact that two of our number had been born in Sri Lanka and had maintained relationships that brought us, almost immediately on reaching the capital city of Colombo, into contact with officials who opened doors that would otherwise have been inaccessible.

On passing through customs at 2:30 a.m. on the Sunday after the tsunami, we were met by a small delegation, several

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members of which would prove invaluable in helping us find our place, literally and figuratively, in the relief effort. The early arrival in Sri Lanka was due less to any forethought on our part than it was to the cumbersome nature of the steps necessary effectively to mobilize a huge juggernaut such as the Red Cross, a relief arm of the United Nations, or even one of the many NGOs that would sweep onto the island within a few days of our appearance. But we had joined together spontaneously within a period of forty-eight hours, made some telephone and e-mail inquiries, and then simply boarded a plane at Kennedy Airport, all without any accurate notion of what to expect. We had in mind only our certainty that doctors would be urgently needed to treat those many injured and diseased by the effect of towering waters that had blasted their way as far as two kilometers beyond the beaches, with the force of a wave traveling at a speed of approximately five hundred miles per hour.

IN RETROSPECT, WE WERE LIKE AN amateur and astonishingly naïve flying squad or rapid-response team, arriving when only the extraordinary Doctors Without Borders and a very few other relatively small groups had managed to begin work. After a few hours of sleep immediately after arrival, we met with a man who in the next two weeks would come to epitomize to us the spirit of Sri Lanka's own relief effort and also the selfless dedication of some of its public officials. Dr. Amal Harsha De Silva (whose name is a reminder of the Portuguese possession of the island, which ended in the seventeenth century) is a pediatrician by training, though his official title is director of private health sector development. This means that he has been the government's designated liaison with any aid groups that might need assistance in organizing their relief efforts, and he also has contact with private organizations in Sri Lanka itself and the rest of the world.

De Silva's job had exploded in its responsibility in the seven days since the tsunami, and he was functioning on little rest and a heavy burden of care. His office is located in the sort of old, poorly lit building that is to be seen all over former colonial countries, furnished with what appear to be the same languid ceiling fans, peeling desks, and rickety chairs that the British or others left behind on the day they withdrew, but now more than half a century older and barely functional. Displaying a large map of the country, De Silva pointed out that the worst destruction had occurred in the north and the east of the island, though the south coast had been hit almost as hard. Some 850,000 people had been displaced from their homes, while many were living on their own or with relatives rather than in one of the nine hundred refugee camps set up by the government.

This large number of camps meant, as we would soon verify for ourselves, that the census in each one was within reasonable bounds, so there were limits to the possible spread of common post-disaster diseases such as infectious diarrhea, respiratory viruses, typhoid, and the dreaded cholera. As soon as a serious case of dysentery or other communicable disease was identified, the patient could be isolated in a hospital or other care facility, a strategy that markedly decreased the possibility of contagion. Since the ministry of health had been extremely effective in the immediate provision of suitable quantities of pure water not only for drinking and cooking but also for personal hygiene and washing dishes and cutlery, few major infections had occurred.

This in itself was a minor miracle and a great surprise to us, especially in view of long-standing complaints we would later hear from villagers and others of an accustomed state of governmental inefficiency and even corruption. On our departure two weeks later, we were shown national disease statistics confirming the success of the ministry's emergency policies. The figures for cholera and the other diseases were no higher after the tsunami than before.

WHILE WE WERE SPEAKING to De Silva and determining where we might most effectively be sent, an episode occurred that would become increasingly significant in determining our overall comprehension of the country's relationship with its government, and of the ways in which foreign aid might best be used. We were introduced to an executive of the David Pieris Motor Company, one of the largest businesses in Sri Lanka, involved in the automotive industry, information communications technology, and financial services. The company is not a corporation, and, as David Pieris himself would later tell us when we met him on the day before our return to the United States, he is answerable to no stockholders and can do as he chooses with his profits. What he chooses is service to the people of his country. The service comes, as his managing director, Sumith Cumaranatunga, put it in an e-mail message received after we had returned home, "with an underlying philosophy that we can only be as successful as the society in which we live."

Upon the news of the tsunami, Pieris immediately donated fifteen million rupees—about $150,000, in a country where a middle-class family can build a comfortable house for less than $600—to relief efforts, and was prepared to do much more. But a crucial clue about the relationship between the private sector and the administration was evident in the recipient whom Pieris had chosen to determine the proper uses for the money and then distribute it appropriately: he had given it to the universally respected De Silva, who, though an official of the health ministry, is known for his probity and dedication. Pieris will not deal with the upper levels of government any more than the functioning of his business demands that he do, and he takes great pains to say so, not hesitating to use language impugning a bureaucracy that he and his executives view with suspicion. "To us, our reputation is everything," wrote Cumaranatunga, "and we are no respecters of personages when it comes to defending our principles." During our two weeks in Sri Lanka, speaking to civil servants, villagers, military officers, merchants, medical personnel, taxi drivers, and so many others, we would have ample opportunity to confirm that Pieris and his company live up to those words.

When Pieris heard of our arrival, he offered us the use of two vans and a pair of drivers for each to transport our team and its stockload of drugs and equipment to the areas in which we were to work. But these were no ordinary drivers. Fifteen percent of every executive's time is donated by the company to social service, and we were about to be taken to our destination by a group headed by Surendra Hettiarachchi, the Pieris regional manager for central Sri Lanka. The following morning we set out on a cross-country drive from Colombo, in the southwest, to Batticaloa, a city of 200,000 people on the east coast, to which at that time no medical team had yet made its way. Though the distance between the two cities is no more than 160 miles, there are no roads that pass directly across the

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island. The country's highway system is so inadequate that it was necessary to follow an indirect path that took us northward and then back in a southerly direction, adding some sixty miles to the journey.

Like the roads in other Third World countries, Sri Lanka's are two-laned and congested with a wide variety of motorized vehicles that cloud the air with pungent black clouds of carbon monoxide–laden exhaust and follow rules comprehensible only to the drivers who make them up as they go along. Traffic lessened considerably as we approached our seacoast destination, but the roads became increasingly worse. We bumped and banged our final twenty miles over a highway so broken up and rutted because of the cheaply constructed pavement (local people blame this on graft by low-level government officials) that a speed of three kilometers per hour was more than we could usually attain. Between the traffic and the slow pace dictated by the almost impassable roadbed, the trip of some 220 miles took more than ten hours.

Batticaloa, the coastal city where we spent much of our first week, is in the upper third of Sri Lanka that is Tamil and therefore primarily Hindu. Military checkpoints are frequent, as are armed government soldiers patrolling on the sides of the road and on the streets of each town through which we passed on the final phases of our journey. Though very few members of the local population support the twenty-five-year-old rebellion of the Tamil Tigers (whose stronghold is well north of the region in which we were), the rebels persist in claiming that this territory is rightfully theirs, and they periodically do something violent to prove it; there have been enough incidents of terrorism that troops with rifles at the ready guard every one of the refugee camps that have been set up within a few miles of the city and well interior to the massive destruction along the shoreline.

IN THE CAMPS OF THAT AREA, AS well as in the Sinhalese and primarily Buddhist south near Matera, where we spent several days during our second week, we followed a routine in which we would arrive, set up a pharmacy and medical stations, and then begin seeing the many men, women, and children who lined up as soon as our vans came to a halt. In all, we held nine clinics in the two locations, seeing between 150 and 200 patients in each. Most of them were displaced persons, but some were local villagers who thronged toward the airless and filthy schoolrooms where most of our visits were made. The temperature was always near ninety in the outside air, and the humidity was the same.

I had brought with me a set of surgical instruments to be used as though in a field hospital, assuming that my principal work would be to treat the late consequences of major trauma. I was wrong. The tsunami had an effect similar to that of September 11, when emergency rooms all over Manhattan prepared themselves for an influx of the seriously injured, and very few came. The reason was the same: almost everyone caught up in the disaster was killed. The great majority of those who survived had minor wounds or no wounds at all. The few severely injured who somehow survived were immediately evacuated to the inadequate and dreadfully maintained hospitals that we later saw, where they were languishing dispiritedly on bare mattresses covering rusty bedsprings, amid open drainage conduits filled with fetid standing water.

My own surgical work would consist in the management of relatively minor and usually infected wounds, the great majority of which had been sustained in the days following the tsunami, during the phase of digging out, when families were seeking bodies and lost possessions. I saw at least half my patients while functioning as what might be called a family physician, much as my five colleagues were doing. The refugees who came to us, apathetic and worn down by a chronicity of poverty and despair to which the tsunami had added a magnum of hopelessness, lined up because they needed to see, or wanted to see, a doctor, for any of several reasons. Sometimes those reasons would prove to be related to the most recent disaster in minimal or unexpected ways, as would be impressed on us again and again in our travels from camp to camp.

We soon discovered that the real good we were doing was not what we had expected it to be. It was not medical need, strictly speaking, that made our presence so important to the families in these crushed places to which we had come from half a world away. It was our physical presence that counted. A warm smile and an arm around the shoulder probably did more for most of our patients than the medications that we gave them for the various complaints so often unaccompanied by any physical findings that might account for them. It was the touching of a hand, the lingering of a man or woman's hand in my own, that seemed to mean so much, or the unexpected hug that made a frightened child laugh in surprise. Comparing notes at the end of our first day, we realized that we were dealing far less with physical than with psychological wounds and inflammations.

The prevailing mood of our patients—virtually all of whom had been living a bare pre-tsunami subsistence on the yields of fishing or the milk derived from the spavined cows and goats that roamed every byway and street to graze on garbage and similar detritus—was a kind of resigned lethargy. Except in a few instances, we never saw sorrow or any evidence of grieving, despite the reality that so many had lost loved ones, and all had lost their homes and everything

From "Works of Mercy"

I am a man now, too, not unlike my father
who ran about town recklessly unfolding

before people then came home
to us who waited for him. He came home

to us, that throttling man: the one who bounced
with me in the ocean then kissed the salt wet

in my hair, who held our mother down in anger
or in love above her all-the-while drifting call *John,*

John, who slung a stag's carcass across his shoulders
and strode out of a forest into a clearing where light

shone intermittently. This is what men do.
They touch and spread desire. They chime

with the violence of desire not during the feast
but later once the body has had time to cool.

JOHN FRAZIER

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they owned. There must have been plenty of widows and widowers and orphans among our patients, but no detached observer could tell which of these dispirited people they were. All of this contrasted remarkably with the general atmosphere of Batticaloa itself, where people in the shops and the streets were going about their business seemingly unaffected by the horrific events that had taken place so close to them.

The members of our team, who came from a variety of professional backgrounds and specialties, and who ranged in age from late twenties to early seventies, were in agreement that the repressed mourning that soon became so obvious was manifesting itself in symptoms that could arise only from that very suppression of overt emotional response. Physicians call such symptoms psycho-physiological. They typically consist of the assortment of complaints that I would hear over and over as our interpreters struggled to make English sense of what they were being told: "I shake a lot now"; "I can't feel my arms and legs anymore"; "I have an itching inside my chest"; "My belly is swollen"; "I have headaches all the time"; "I can't sleep." All these reports of inner states were without any objective findings associated with them, as was the too-frequent abdominal pain, or the invisible rash insistently described to me and my incredulous interpreter by one middle-aged man.

In any culture in the world, including those that are reputed to have the ability to face hardship and loss with a religious serenity, these are worrisome complaints, because they tell a physician that rage, guilt, conflict, or any of several other unhappy and unwelcome emotional states are being converted into symptomatology that is mistakenly attributed to organic causes. Of course, there were some dehydrated children who needed treatment, and the occasional respiratory or middle ear infection or relatively mild diarrhea as well as a variety of other minor illnesses and that assortment of infected wounds that I cleaned and dressed—but all of us agreed that we were witnessing an alarming phenomenon, the kind of situation that too frequently foretells later overt psychological breakdown.

It was not enough that we were observing these warnings in so many individuals. The greater concern was that a society that has suddenly lost more than 35,000 souls and an untold number of homes, a society filled with bereft and haunted adults and children who have not only lost so much but have also seen so much, a society of which so many members were impoverished and without hope long before the tsunami—this is a society in danger. The danger lies in the virtual inevitability in the months to come of widespread manifestations of the condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder, in essence a serious form of depression recognized under various names for more than a century in survivors of major calamities, but only in recent decades fully described in all of its perilous characteristics. No matter how individuals may suffer, an even greater danger is a kind of national inertia, loss of productivity, and an inability to deal with the realities of everyday life.

WITH EACH PASSING DAY of our mission, increasing numbers of NGOs and the larger agencies arrived to provide medical aid, until it seemed that we were all getting in one another's way. Before long, our small group became not only redundant but less effective than we had been at first. It became clear that, having obtained a microcosmic perception by our work in the camps, the best way to contribute something of macrocosmic and perhaps lasting significance was to make observations in the devastated areas, to speak at some length to survivors of the tsunami, and then—utilizing the knowledge of the members of our team with wide experience in Third World countries—to make recommendations to De Silva, Pieris, and any representatives of the Sri Lankan government who might wish to speak with us. As it turned out, these included the prime minister and the minister of health; but we soon came to realize that, with the exception of De Silva and Pieris, our other contacts seemed too concerned with the immediate problems (or perhaps with impressing upon us how well they were dealing with their country's fragility) to focus on matters that might become troublesome as the months wore on.

Of greatest concern is the significant probability—several of our number, myself included, consider it a virtual inevitability—of what might be called a national epidemic of post-traumatic stress disorder involving large segments of the populations directly or indirectly affected by the tsunami. There are only twenty trained psychiatrists in the entire country, so a great deal of help will be needed, especially skilled professionals to train physicians, nurses, men and women who work in social services. Many will be required in order to provide psychological counseling and various forms of support. For the heartbreaking number of children who have been left without parents, the country must have a complete overhaul of its orphanages and a critical evaluation of its adoption procedures.

But Sri Lanka will need far more than attention to the havoc caused by the tsunami itself. There is an absolute necessity to put people back to work—so soon, indeed, that it must be thought of as an emergency measure. As is true of so many Third World countries, this is a chronically depressed society in which large numbers of men and women are barely or not at all occupied in meaningful work. Upon this long-standing problem has been thrown the acute and immense psychological burden of enormous loss, displacement, and an exacerbation of underlying mistrust of the government, as well as a certain overt denial of the emotional effects of the tragedy, as manifest in ordinary behavior. To illustrate the prevalence of chronic clinical depression predating the tragedy, the national suicide rate is said to be so high that the major hospital in Batticaloa (and elsewhere as well, we were told) has a poison intensive care unit, because villagers and others so often try to do away with themselves by ingesting fertilizers and insecticides, the only sufficiently toxic materials available to the poor.

The urgent necessity to put people to work dovetails with the country's most important long-term need, which is a national undertaking to rebuild a woefully inadequate and even dangerous

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infrastructure of roads, bridges, hospitals, and dwelling places. Supplies and equipment have poured into the country since the tsunami, but transportation between parts of the island is so difficult that this, far more than any lack of materials, has been a major factor standing in the way of aid and recovery efforts. As part of achieving these goals, the entire hospital system must be rebuilt. Not only are the conditions for patients and staff appalling, but the very architecture of Sri Lanka stands in the way of effective care. The major hospitals are built in the antiquated pavilion style, the former colonial model long discarded for modern facilities because of its inefficiency and its difficulty to maintain.

As two of my medical teammates—an internist and an infectious-disease expert who have been involved in disaster relief in such places as East Timor, Kosovo, Chechnya, and several African countries—pointed out, there is no single international organization capable of responding immediately with massive aid and the ability to coordinate the efforts of the many NGOs and individual groups that begin to pour in once they have overcome the logistical problems of getting themselves under way. The huge outfits such as the Red Cross and the United Nations take too long to arrive in full force and seem far less systematized than one is led to believe. What is needed is an international working conference on disaster relief that brings together all the appropriate experts and groups, and coordinates a predictably functional system that is reviewed each year. What better place to hold such a conference than Colombo?

Sri Lanka needs a re-orientation of its national priorities. Its location and its extraordinary natural beauty have gifted the island nation with the potential to build one of the leading tourist industries in Asia—yet it has remained barely developed, largely because of poor infrastructure, little investment, sparseness of know-how, and a seeming inability to recognize possibilities. And there is the terrifying political context for all the island's miseries: the decades-long excruciation of an ethnic and religious war in which 64,000 people have so far been killed. (It was in this savage conflict that suicide bombing was invented as an instrument of war.) An outburst of economic accomplishment, with its accompanying improvement of conditions across the social and ethnic divisions within the country, would go a long way toward healing some of the open wounds that have served to perpetuate the Tamil rebellion and to frustrate the thus far inadequate internal and international efforts to solve it. The key to all this will very likely prove to be far less the role of the Sri Lankan government than the participation of its private internal organizations and the international business community.

Is there what Americans would call an "upside" to such a catastrophe? In the wake of such massive and arbitrary suffering, the search for a saving significance is inescapable. And so it is important to remember that success breeds success, and spreads its effects among the disaffected and rebellious as it spreads optimism, a sense of goodwill, and the capacity to compromise in order to perpetuate gains that are being made. By bringing the world's attention to the acute and chronic disasters of Sri Lanka, the tsunami may paradoxically have come with the silver lining that lifts the country, and some of the other involved areas, out of its long-standing state of neglect and torpor and despair. ■

John Banville
Hardness

DIRTY SNOW
By Georges Simenon
Translated by Marc Romano
and Louise Varèse
(New York Review Books, 257 pp., $14)

THREE BEDROOMS IN MANHATTAN
By Georges Simenon
Translated by Marc Romano
and Lawrence G. Blochman
(New York Review Books,
158 pp., $12.95)

MONSIEUR MONDE VANISHES
By Georges Simenon
Translated by Jean Stewart
(New York Review Books,
174 pp., $12.95)

GEORGES SIMENON FAMOUSLY claimed to have slept with ten thousand women during the course of his lifetime. Or perhaps it was twenty thousand—the figure varies. He also produced between four hundred and six hundred novels in various genres and under various pseudonyms, as well as innumerable short stories and thousands of pages of dictated memoirs. It does not take a mathematician to calculate that he must have been a very busy man, not to mention an overachiever. It is said that in the 1920s he broke off an affair with Josephine Baker because in the year that he was with her he managed to complete only twelve novels. She was a distraction from his work.

Simenon was born in Liège, Belgium in 1903, the son of an under-achieving accountant and a disapproving and (by her son's account) less than warm-hearted mother. When he was sixteen he left school and went to work as a reporter on the *Gazette de Liège*, and he published his first novel the following year. At the age of twenty he moved to Paris and began his career in earnest as a writer. He submitted stories to Colette, then literary editor of the newspaper *Le Matin*. She urged him to pare his style to the bone, surely the best advice that he ever received, and which he wisely took. He set to writing pulp fiction, in which he was highly successful, churning out books under a couple of dozen pen names. By his mid-twenties he was rich, and embarked on a series of travels that would take him throughout Europe and to Africa and, in 1934, all the way around the world. It was a pattern of unremitting work and obsessive restlessness that was to endure for most of his life.

In 1923 he married a young painter named Règine Renchon, but the marriage was to end in divorce. In New York just after World War II he met Denyse Ouimet, a French Canadian seventeen years his junior, whom he had interviewed for a secretarial job; the couple were married in 1950, in Reno, and moved to Connecticut, where they lived for the next five years. Returning to

John Banville's latest novel is SHROUD *(Knopf).*

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Europe in 1955, the Simenons settled in Lausanne in a huge house, Epalinges, that was as ugly and clinically functional as a hospital. As the marriage disintegrated—Simenon carried on a long affair with a servant in the house—Denyse floundered into depression. In 1964 she left Epalinges for a real hospital.

Shortly afterward their daughter also entered into a course of psychiatric treatment, but to no avail, and in 1978 she killed herself. In a volume of his memoirs published in 1981, Simenon blamed Denyse for the girl's death, but Denyse had already made her case against her husband in an angry memoir of her own, *Un Oiseau pour le chat* (*A Bird for the Cat*), published the year their daughter died. It could all have been a plot for one of Simenon's novels, although he probably would have rejected it as too melodramatic.

Pietr-le-Letton (1930), the first novel that Simenon published under his own name, introduced his best-known character, the pipe-smoking detective Inspector Maigret. Between 1930 and 1973, when he retired from fiction writing and devoted himself to dictating his memoirs, Simenon produced more than eighty Maigret novels. It is on these books that his fame chiefly rests—it has been calculated that half a billion "simenons," in fifty languages, have been sold; but his finest work is in the *romans durs*, or "hard" novels, three of the most striking of which have now been republished by New York Review Books.

The *romans durs* are extraordinary: tough, bleak, offhandedly violent, suffused with guilt and bitterness, redolent of place (Simenon is unsurpassed as a scene-setter), utterly unsentimental, frightening in the pitilessness of their gaze, yet wonderfully entertaining. They are also more philosophically profound than any of the fiction of Camus or Sartre, and far less self-conscious. This is existentialism with a backbone of tempered steel.

Dirty Snow is an astonishing work. Signed off at "Tucson (Arizona) 20 March 1948," it was published in that year in France as *La Neige était sale* and in 1951 in an English translation by Marc Romano and Louise Varèse. (It is this translation that New York Review Books has now issued in a new and heavily revised version.) Nasty, brutish, and not very long, the book presents a thoroughly Hobbesian view of life on this dwindling planet; here indeed is the war of all against all. The novel is set in an unnamed European city, most likely Liège, during the German occupation. Over the course of a seemingly interminable winter, Frank Friedmaier, the central character, turns nineteen. When we meet him he is standing at night in a snow-filled alley with a borrowed knife in his pocket, waiting in grim excitement to commit his first murder, a Gidean *acte gratuit* the gratuitousness of which would have shocked Gide himself.

Frank's victim is to be a "noncommissioned officer" known as the Eunuch, a member of the occupation forces. Frank has no particular reason to kill him; it is simply a rite of passage to be performed, a losing of virginity. For Frank, we are told, "it was a question of killing his first man and breaking in Kromer's Swedish knife." Frank is driven partly by a determination not to be outdone by his friend Kromer, who has already carried out a killing, described on the second page of the book. It is worth quoting this description at length, for even in translation it is richly representative of Simenon's brisk, sleek, and seemingly effortless style (or non-style), glassy-eyed in its impassivity and yet thoroughly, horribly compelling. Coming out of Timo's bar, the small-time hood Kromer is confronted by a "skinny little man, pale and feverish," with red hair, to whom apparently he sold something unsatisfactory and who now is seeking reparation. The little man grabs Kromer by the collar of his coat and begins yelling at him.

> Kromer, in the middle of the dark alley between the two banks of snow, took the cigar out of his mouth with his left hand. He punched with his right, just once. Then two arms and two legs were in the air, just like a marionette, and then the black form sank down into the pile of snow along the sidewalk. The strangest thing was that there was an orange peel beside the head—something you probably wouldn't see anywhere in town except in front of Timo's.
>
> Timo came out without his overcoat or cap, dressed just as he had been at the bar. He poked the marionette and stuck out his lower lip.
>
> "He's had it," he growled. "In an hour he'll be stiff."
>
> Had Kromer really killed the redhead with a single punch? That's what he wanted people to believe. The little runt wouldn't say one way or the other. At the suggestion of Timo, who wasted no time, he had been carried some two hundred yards away and dumped in the Old Basin, where the sewers drained and kept the water from freezing over.
>
> So Kromer could claim he'd killed his man. Even if Timo was right, even if the marionette, which had had to be tossed into the air over a little brick wall, hadn't been quite dead.

Frank lives with his mother Lotte, who runs a brothel in their apartment. He does not know the identity of his father, but suspects that it is the police inspector, Hamling, a frequent visitor who acts, it is implied, as Lotte's protector in these dangerous times. But Frank has fixed on another and far more preferred father figure. He is Gerhardt Holst, his neighbor in the apartment building, an intellectual out of favor with the authorities who has been forced to take a job as a streetcar conductor. Holst makes only the most fleeting of appearances in the book, yet for Frank he is a presiding deity, at once remote and fascinating, an object almost of veneration. Holst passes by as Frank waits in the alley to commit his murder, and Frank wishes the older man might pause a moment and "see the thing done," for it seems to him that there is already a secret bond between the two of them, that "it was really as though he had just chosen Holst, as though he had always known that things would turn out this way, because he wouldn't have done it for anyone but the streetcar conductor."

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Holst has a daughter, the innocent and pure-hearted Sissy, who falls in love with Frank, and whose love Frank repays by tricking her into sacrificing her virginity not to him, as she believes, but to Kromer, with whom he switches places in a darkened bedroom. Discovering how she has been betrayed, Sissy flees the house and almost perishes in the snow. Meanwhile Frank has killed again, in the course of robbing a cache of antique watches that will be sold to a German officer. Frank is at last picked up by the authorities, not for the killings he has committed, about which nobody seems to care in the least, but because of his tenuous connection with the German officer, who it turns out has paid for the watches with money stolen from official sources. Frank is suspect also owing to the fact that one of the girls working for his mother turns out to be a member of the resistance on the run.

These details are of scant interest to Frank. In imprisonment, interrogation, and torture he has found a sort of holy task, a ritualized process of atonement and even (although neither he nor Simenon would dream of using the word) redemption. As the days and weeks of his incarceration go on, he descends deep into himself. It is an existential journey, and along the way he comes to understand himself and the impossible predicament in which he is caught—not the predicament of being a prisoner but, on the contrary, of being free, the most burdensome state of all. What his interrogators require of him is reasons; did he do this *because*, did he do that *because*...? "There was no *because*. It was a word for fools." In reality, he sees, "he had resisted just to resist." At the end Holst and Sissy are allowed to visit him—perhaps in a devilish stratagem by the authorities to get Frank to confess. Sissy tells him, to his astonishment and joy, that she still loves him, but almost more important than her declaration of forgiveness is the moment when Holst "laid his hand on Frank's shoulder exactly as Frank had always known a father would." After that, death for Frank is a mere incidental, a supererogatory closure to a life already completed.

Dirty Snow is a bleak masterpiece, its darkness, as William T. Vollmann writes in a perceptive afterword, "as solid and heavy as the interior of a dwarf star." What Frank wants, Vollmann points out, is to be known: "He scarcely knows himself, or anything else worth knowing. But if he can somehow stand revealed to the gaze of the Other, then maybe he will achieve some sort of realization." What makes the book so harrowing is that at the culmination of this search for authenticity, despite Holst's paternal gesture and Sissy's vow of love—Vollmann suggests, and he is right, that the prison visit by Holst and Sissy is the one false note in the book—what Frank discovers is that even authenticity itself is no great thing, that in the end there is no *because*.

Unlike Joyce, who boasted of being nowhere to be found in his work but is everywhere visible in it, Simenon really was a disinterested observer, standing apart from the world that he created, paring his fingernails. Still, in the atmosphere of *Dirty Snow*, sweaty and soiled and rife with insinuation, we might be permitted to detect a hint of the *mauvaise conscience* of a writer who lived in France contentedly enough through the occupation and at the war's end found himself accused of collaboration, so that, although the charges were eventually dropped, he had to flee to Canada, later moving on to the United States. In *Trois chambres à Manhattan*, first published in 1946 and now translated by Marc Romano and Lawrence G. Blochman as *Three Bedrooms in Manhattan*, the protagonist, François Combe, a famous Parisian actor in his late forties who has fled to America after a scandalous and shaming breakup with his actress wife, is a scarcely disguised self-portrait.

In a Manhattan bar, Combe encounters Kay Miller, a Viennese expatriate living in America pretty much by her wits, and falls for her altogether despite himself. "She smoked like American women—the same gestures, the same pouting lips you saw on magazine covers and in movies. She struck the same poses, too, shrugging her fur coat off her shoulders to reveal her black silk dress, crossing her long legs in their sheer stockings." Kay in her turn is undoubtedly a portrait of Denyse Ouimet. Through the bars and the night streets of the city, and the three bedrooms of the title—the first is in a cheap hotel, the second is Combe's rented bolt-hole, the third is Kay's room in her shared apartment—the two stumble over some serious emotional obstacles, including Combe's violent jealousy and Kay's emotional fecklessness, into a love that seems to leave Combe as much dismayed as happy. In her introduction, Joyce Carol Oates accepts the book as a fictionalized memoir, and sees Simenon, "master of irony . . . overcome by wonder at what is happening to him, succumbing to romantic infatuation in jaded middle age."

The urge to flee life's embroilments and disappear into anonymity is an obsessively recurring theme in Simenon's work. Nowhere is it worked out more neatly and persuasively than in *La Fuite de Monsieur Monde*, published in 1952, and in English in 1967 as *Monsieur Monde Vanishes*, in a translation by Jean Stewart now republished by NYRB. Norbert Monde (Simenon had a wonderful way with names) is a cautiously successful Parisian businessman running the brokerage and export firm founded by his grandfather. On the morning of his forty-eighth birthday—the same age, not incidentally, as François Combe in *Three Bedrooms*, and as the writer himself just after his marriage to Ouimet—Monsieur Monde has his barber shave off his moustache, withdraws 300,000 francs from his bank account, exchanges his tailor-made suit for an anonymous secondhand outfit, and walks out of his life without a word to anyone.

Monsieur Monde's flight is not provoked by any grand crisis. True, his marriage is unhappy, his daughter is interested in him only for his money, he has had to come to the reluctant acknowledgment that his son is homosexual, and his work has ceased to engage him, if ever it did. But when he leaves it all behind he does not run so much as drift, "following a preordained plan, for which he was not responsible." He takes a train to Marseilles and checks into a featureless hotel, and in the morning half-wakes to find himself in tears, an "endless flow from some deep spring," and speaking to himself without moving his lips: "He was telling of his infinite aching weariness, which was due not to his journey in a train but to his long journey as a man." The state into which Monsieur Monde has fallen, or risen, is at once numbed and ecstatic. "He was lucid, not with an everyday lucidity, the sort one finds acceptable, but on the contrary the sort of which one subsequently feels ashamed, perhaps because it confers on supposedly commonplace things the grandeur ascribed to them by poetry and religion." The insinuation of shame here, utterly unexpected, utterly right, is pure Simenon.

In Marseilles, Monsieur Monde takes up with Julie, a nightclub performer—"and presently her lips stained the pallid

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tip of a cigarette with a vivid pink that was more sensuously feminine than a woman's blood"—and they travel together to Nice. No sooner have they arrived in that city than all of Monde's money is stolen. The ever-resourceful Julie at once finds jobs for them both at the Monico, a nightclub and rundown casino. It is at the Monico that Monsieur Monde re-encounters his first wife, Thérèse, whom he has not seen for eighteen years. Thérèse is, or was, a nymphomaniac, who kept obscene photographs in a secret drawer in her desk and "who had sought out their chauffeur in his attic bedroom and who, when he drove her into town, had him stop in front of dubious apartment houses." Now fallen on hard times, she is acting as companion to a rich old bag known as the Empress, a habitué of the Monico.

When the Empress unexpectedly dies, Monde is compelled to take responsibility for Thérèse, who has become a drug addict. He returns with her to Paris, installs her in an apartment in the suburbs, instructs a doctor friend of his to supply her with whatever quantities of morphine she requires, and washes his hands of her. Then he calmly walks back into his old life, to the consternation of his wife, who during his absence had been happily settling into the position of rich widow:

> She felt impelled to remark: "You haven't changed."
>
> He replied, with that composure which he had brought back with him, and under which could be glimpsed a terrifying abyss: "Yes, I have."
>
> That was all. He was relaxed. He was part of life, as flexible and fluid as life itself.

These three *romans durs*, and the ones that will follow them, including the insouciantly gruesome *The Man Who Watched the Trains Go By*, another tale of a husband on the run, and *Tropic Moon*, a frightening study of lust and violence in the Belgian Congo, are superb and polished works of art masquerading as pulp fiction. Gide, who admired Simenon, felt that he did not achieve his full potential as an artist, which may be true: if he had tackled his obsessiveness and found a way of slowing himself down, he might have written the leisurely and long-fermented work that Gide apparently expected of him. But that book would not have been a "simenon," and it is in the "simenons," and most particularly in the *romans durs*, that Simenon displayed his prodigious, protean, and genuine genius. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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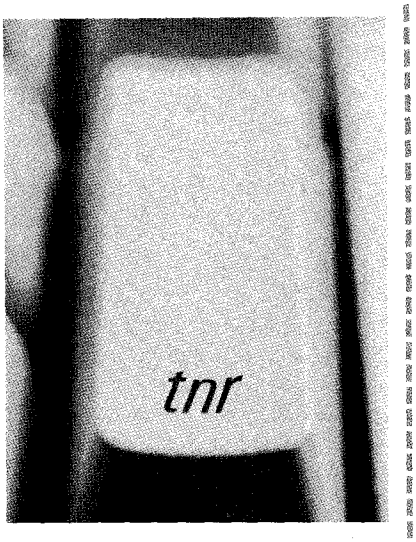
JUST AS SULLIVAN HAS BEEN WAITing to say that Clinton is absolutely right, I've been waiting to say that of him. Trite as the phrase, "It's a baby, not a choice," may be, it is a sentiment that resonates with many liberal, progressive Democrats like myself. Clinton found a way to express the feelings of those of us who feel this way but could never affiliate ourselves with the pro-life movement.

JANE ISTVAN
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

IT IS PRECISELY SULLIVAN'S POSITION on abortion that is the most perplexing to truly pro-life people. The supporters of abortion rights whom he criticizes for "foolishly and callously trivializ[ing] the moral dimensions of the act of ending human life in the womb" are at least consistent in their logic. If there is "no profound moral cost" involved, as Sullivan contends is their belief, there is no argument against the legality of abortion. Our laws are, after all, unavoidably rooted in morality. Sullivan's position, on the other hand, is that abortion is a "moral tragedy" and "always wrong," and that the goal is to reduce the number of abortions. Yet, he argues, the procedure should remain legal. Perhaps Sullivan doesn't understand the widely accepted social-psychological principle that the attitudes of citizens, and therefore their behavior, can be transformed by the moral overtones of adopted laws. The civil rights movement is a model example. The mass American cultural shift in attitudes toward race didn't occur until after Congress had passed laws proscribing segregation and discrimination, particularly the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Apparently many people don't fully recognize the immorality of something until it is proscribed by law. I think this mindset is especially true for young people, who also happen to be of childbearing age. What better way, then, to reduce the number of abortions than to send this message in the form of law?

JOSH BRASHEARS
Miami, Florida



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VATICAN CITY DIARIST

Final Curtain

EASTER SUNDAY AT ST. PETER'S Square ought to be one of those perfect collisions of time and place, like Mardi Gras in New Orleans or Thanksgiving in New England. But this year, I happen to be living in Rome during the strangest Easter in memory, when the Pope's mysterious illness completely overshadows even the elaborate pageantry of Holy Week. And so, on Easter Sunday morning, I found myself anxiously standing in front of St. Peter's Basilica, shoulder-to-shoulder with religious pilgrims and curious visitors, waiting for the famous Easter Mass to begin, wondering if I was there out of respect, journalistic interest, or mere ghoulish voyeurism.

IN ONE SENSE, WAKING UP EARLY AND walking to the Vatican seems like the obvious thing to do in Rome this time of year. From Palm Sunday to Easter, the city is garlanded with tourists. Grocery stores bloom with foil-wrapped chocolate eggs the size of footballs, and it is impossible to avoid the *colomba pasquale*, a traditional sugar-coated cake shaped roughly like a dove. On Good Friday, a chunk of the city center closes down for a dramatic reenactment of the Stations of the Cross at the Colosseum. There is no such thing as an empty hotel room, and every list of "high season" prices is timed to include Easter weekend. And, of course, the climactic experience for every pilgrim in Rome is the moment at noon on Sunday when the Pope personally blesses the crowd.

OR NOT. THIS YEAR, THE MOST OPTIMISTIC thing you could say was that the Vatican had not formally canceled Easter. By Sunday, the Pope had not spoken in public in two weeks. His last official appearance had been on giant projection screens via video link on Good Friday—when he was filmed, creepily, from behind. (Skeptics here watched carefully to be sure the Pope actually moved.) So, by noon on Easter, all 70,000 people jammed into St. Peter's Square were focused not on the outdoor Mass being solemnly celebrated in front of them, but on a single window high in an adjacent palazzo. It was the window of the papal apartment, and, all around me, people craned for a look the 84-year-old man with Parkinson's at the center of the whole thing. Theologically, this seemed troubling. It's true that Christianity promises redemption at the hands of one suffering, dying man, but that man is not supposed to be the Pope.

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS, POPE JOHN Paul II may have died, he may be recovering, or he may have slid further toward incapacitation. It is no coincidence that end-of-life ethics have achieved new prominence in Vatican press releases, or that every development in the Terri Schiavo case has been followed with rapt attention in the Italian media, which faces the prospect of the first Pope on life support. The Vatican's thinkers are bold about wading into specifics in such matters; so far, they have made clear that a feeding tube and IV are a moral obligation, the modern equivalent of providing food and water to a sick person. The moral status of a ventilator remains less clear.

IF THE TRICKY ETHICS OF LIFE SUPPORT are the Vatican's problem, determining the Pope's condition is the daily nightmare of the Vatican press corps. From the moment that an Italian journalist broke the story of the Pope's hospitalization in early February, reporters in the normally calm, privileged world of Rome bureaus have lived in worried exhaustion. One reporter I know spent several nights camped out at Policlinico Gemelli, the Catholic teaching hospital where the Pope stays in a private tenth-floor suite; another reporter in the Vatican press room confided to a friend that she had not had a day off in a month. "Of course I don't want it to happen," she said, everyone understanding what "it" was. "But, then again, I wish it just would."

THE EASTER CROWD IN FRONT OF ST. Peter's had traveled from Portugal, Slovakia, the United States, the Philippines, and dozens of other countries to see something happen, but not "it." And so, at the end of the Mass, when the Vatican's secretary of state read a benediction, 70,000 necks swiveled upward and rightward. The gauzy curtains to the papal apartments parted. A tiny white-robed figure was wheeled into view, hunched but steady. The ailing Pope held his hand up. The crowd immediately burst into applause. I watched him through binoculars; from one side of the window, a black-sleeved arm appeared silently and adjusted the Pope's cap. The Pope conspicuously failed in his one attempt to talk—a kind of Darth Vader breathing sound came over the giant speakers—but his grip on the situation looked firm. When the cardinal read the words "natural catastrophes," the Pope grasped his head with his hands, pantomiming woe. I was unexpectedly moved. This tiny, frail figure was making a heroic effort to communicate with us. People around me were dabbing their eyes, crying. They were not voyeurs. But not everyone was moved to piety and reverence by the holiness of the Pope's suffering. Some, it seemed, were moved by his mere celebrity. After the Pope's appearance, dozens of teenagers formed an impromptu mosh pit and chanted for an encore. I was caught behind a conga line. These kids had not come for Mass. They had come to see, perhaps for the last time, the most famous person in the world.

LIKE RONALD REAGAN, KAROL WOJTYLA started out as an actor, and his pontificate has always been more than tinged by the theatrical. Now his career as a policy figure is essentially over, and what's left are only these pure, brief moments of human drama. Watching the teenagers dance, I had to wonder: Should the Pope have tried to rein in his own celebrity? Is this need for adulation a human flaw in the Pope, or in us? For a minute I was pleased to have had such a profound thought, and then I realized that this question is the plot of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The disciples in the musical, you will recall, worry that Jesus' personal celebrity is outshining his message. They debate this to the literock stylings of early Andrew Lloyd Webber. Of course, as the head of the Roman Catholic Church, with about one billion adherents worldwide, the Pope is perhaps fated to be a popular icon. Nevertheless, I have the sense that the increasingly kinetic power of fame is something the Church will have to wrestle with after John Paul II's successor takes the stage in St. Peter's Square.

STEPHEN HEUSER

Stephen Heuser is an editor for THE BOSTON GLOBE *living in Rome.*

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When President Bush visited Mainz recently, the whole region was on high security alert and there was little contact with the German public. The press has harped on contrasts with past presidents and their more crowd-pleasing appearances: John Kennedy addressing throngs declaring "Ich bin ein Berliner," Ronald Reagan at the Berlin Wall, and Bill Clinton strolling through the Brandenburg Gate after the end of communism. That Bush's visit seemed to be hermetically sealed off from ordinary Germans has been taken as proof of his unpopularity and the alleged failure of American foreign policy.

Not surprisingly, the story is more complex. Of course, security concerns are greater today in the wake of September 11. Of course, parts of Western Europe, notably Germany and France, remain in the grips of an anti-American obsession. Had Bush come close to large crowds, they would have certainly been hostile. The question is, why? The answer goes far beyond opposition to the Iraq war.

According to a recent poll, **less than a third of Germans today feel any gratitude toward the United States either for support during the 1948 Soviet blockade of Berlin or for American leadership in winning the cold war in 1989.** Although it may be natural that memories of the early cold war have faded, it is surprising that Germans also dismiss the importance of U.S. support during the process of German unification (which most of their European neighbors resisted). No good deed goes unpunished. In fact, the initial postunification enthusiasm has worn off, and although few Germans pine for the days of communist East Germany, a unified Germany, America's gift, is regarded as a mixed blessing.

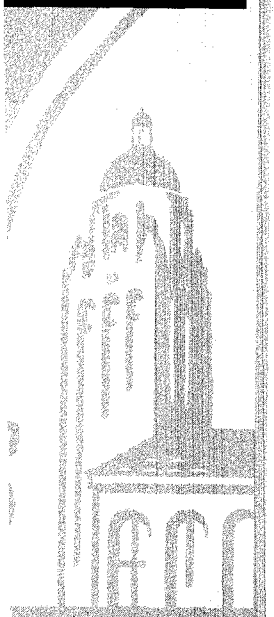
Although animosity to the United States lingers on, a big surprise is emerging in Germany. Here and there, in the formerly anti-American German press, are indications of an about-face—not just an effort to tone down the rhetoric of transatlantic carping but a genuine rethinking of the Bush presidency. The most salient example is in, of all places, the popular news magazine *Der Spiegel,* which one used to count on for routine Bush-bashing. Suddenly, the Germans are asking a new question, "Could Bush be right?" (and that's a quote!).

Reagan too was greeted with hostility and skepticism in 1987, and his call to demolish the Berlin Wall, treated as proof of a simplistic lack of sophistication—another naïve American with pie-in-the-sky ideals. According to worldly European wisdom, communist Eastern Europe would last forever; two years later the wall had been torn down and the continent reshaped. Bush as Reagan? This is the specter haunting Europe today. The bold metaphor is that, just as democracy swept like a prairie fire through Eastern Europe, it is making headway in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Ukraine and Palestine. Even in Beirut and Damascus change is under way. To quote *Der Spiegel:* "Bush may end up being just as right as Reagan was." German-American relations seem to be improving after all.

—Russell A. Berman

Russell A. Berman is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and the Walter A. Haas Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University. He is the author of Anti-Americanism in Europe: A Cultural Problem *(2004).*

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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